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THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

‘The question of miracle is one which incessantly rises up anew, and—particularly at the present time—will not consent to rest.’—JOHANNES WENDLAND (1910).

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

A STUDY OF THE EVIDENCE

Being
THE DAVIES LECTURE FOR
THE YEAR 1913

By

E. O. DAVIES, B.Sc.

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Systematic Theology,' etc

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EXTRACT FROM THE TRUST DEED OF THE 'DAVIES LECTURE'

THOMAS DAVIES, of Bootle, near Liverpool,
being deeply interested in the success and prosperity of the religious denomination known as

THE WELSH CALVINISTIC METHODISTS,

and being actuated by a desire to perpetuate the memory of his late father,

DAVID DAVIES,

who was for many years a faithful and consistent member of the said denomination, lately resolved to found and endow a Lectureship to be called

THE DAVIES LECTURE,

in connexion with the said denomination ; and for that purpose, in June, 1893, paid to Trustees, appointed by the General Assembly, the sum of £2,000, to produce annually the sum of £50.

The Lecturer shall be a fully ordained Minister of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists.

The subject of the Lecture shall be RELIGION.

vi EXTRACT FROM THE TRUST DEED

The Lecturer shall be allowed considerable latitude in the treatment of the subject.

While special attention should be given to the Christian Religion, it is not intended to exclude the subject of other religions.

Such topics as the following may be taken up by successive Lecturers :—

The Definition of Religion.

The Origin, Growth, and Development, together with the Universality of Religion.

The Philosophy of Religion.

The Science of Comparative Religion.

The Jewish Religion in its various stages.

The Christian Religion in its Developments and Corruptions, in its Doctrines and Practices.

The Relation of Science to Religion.

The Relation of Morality to Religion.

All topics fairly connected with Religion in any of its aspects, whether Theological, Philosophical, or Historical.

PREFACE

AT the end of 1905 the Lecturer published a work entitled, *Theological Encyclopædia : an Introduction to the Study of Theology*. The book aims at giving a scientific classification of the theological *disciplinae*, and at indicating the method to be followed in their pursuit. In 1909 he published a *Prolegomena to Systematic Theology* which attempts to apply the scientific method in *A Study of Authority*.

The present Lecture on *The Miracles of Jesus* is intended to illustrate further the application of the same method in a study involving scientific, philosophical, and historical criticism.

In Book I the alleged miracles are studied simply as extraordinary events which, judging by the face value of the narratives recording them, do not happen in the course of nature as known to us. The evidence for the alleged events is examined, and an attempt is made to judge it in the light of analogy. In Book II the term miracle is used with the implication that the extraordinary acts attributed to Jesus were 'acts for which the immanent causal nexus could not account (even if our knowledge were adequate).' The following aspects

of miracle, regarded in this sense, are dealt with in succession:—Physical Impossibility and Possibility, Moral Impossibility and Possibility, and Antecedent Probability. Then, the view of Hume that no amount of evidence can substantiate a miracle is examined. In conclusion, the evidence, as determined in Book I, for the extraordinary acts attributed to Jesus is reconsidered in the light of the results reached in Book II respecting miracles as there regarded.

In dealing with such a topic as *The Miracles of Jesus* nothing is more important than an exact definition of terms, and a strictly scientific method of procedure. It is hoped that the present Lecture will be helpful to clear thinking on the subject.

The Lecturer has benefited much by the criticism of several eminent scholars, to all of whom he tenders his sincere thanks.

MONTANVERT, LLANDUDNO,

June, 1913.

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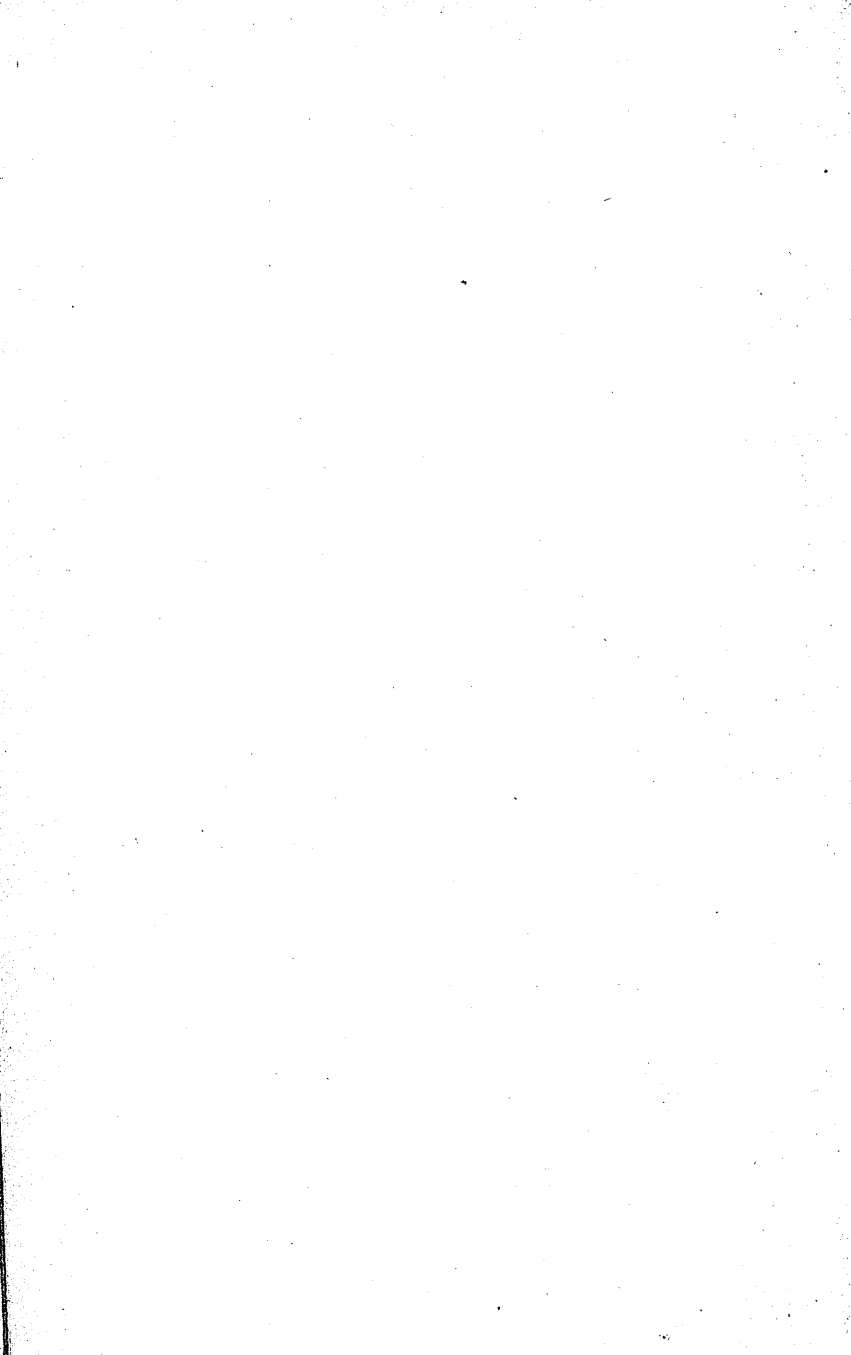
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Introduction



CHAPTER I

THE ALLEGED FACTS

THE etymological meaning of miracle—*miraculum*—is something wonderful. In the Gospels many wonderful things are reported to have been done by Jesus. We shall give a complete list of all the deeds attributed to him which have a *prima facie* claim to be regarded as marvellous.

(1) *Turning water into wine.* John ii. 1-11. The act is described as the beginning of the 'signs' of Jesus.

(2) *Various signs.* John ii. 23.

(3) *Cure of a nobleman's son.* John iv. 46-54. The son was sick (*ἡσθέει*). He was at the point of death. The illness is diagnosed as a fever (*πυρετός*). The sufferer was healed at a distance.

(4) *Cure of a sick man* (*ἄσθενῶν*). John v. 1-16. He had been suffering from an infirmity (*ἐν τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ*) thirty and eight years.

(5) *Cure of a man with an unclean spirit.* Mark i. 21-28, Luke iv. 31-37. Mark describes the sufferer as a man 'with an unclean spirit (*ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ*).'
He is said by Luke to have 'a spirit of an unclean

devil (ἔχων πνεῦμα δαιμονίου ἀκαθάρτου).’ The genitive is a genitive of apposition or of nearer definition; and the adjective is to be understood ethically. According to Luke, the devil having spoken, ‘Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him down (ρίψαν) in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no hurt (μηδὲν βλάβαν αὐτόν).’ The word used for ‘throw down’ (ρίπτειν) is used in the New Testament in connexion with disease in this passage only. It is used in medical language of convulsive fits and similar affections.¹ The word translated ‘to hurt,’ also, was in constant use in medical language.²

(6) *Cure of Simon’s mother-in-law.* Matthew viii. 14, 15; Mark i. 29-31; Luke iv. 38, 39. Luke says, ‘And Simon’s wife’s mother was holden with a great fever (συνεχομένη πυρετῷ μεγάλῳ).’ Hobart says that *συνέχεσθαι* (to be holden with) is used by the medical writers as in this passage; and also that ‘Galen states that it was usual with the ancient physicians to distinguish fevers by the terms μέγας and μικρός.’³

(7) *Various cures.* Matthew viii. 16, 17; Mark i. 32-34; Luke iv. 40, 41. Matthew says: ‘They brought unto him many possessed with devils (δαιμονιζομένους): and he cast out the spirits (πνεύματα) with a word, and healed all that were sick (κακῶς ἔχοντας).’ Mark: ‘And he healed many that were sick with divers

¹ See Hobart, *The Medical Language of St. Luke*, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, ³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 3, 4.

diseases (κακῶς ἔχοντας ποικίλαις νόσοις) and cast out many devils (δαιμόνια).’ Luke: ‘And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases (ἀσθενούντας νόσοις ποικίλαις) brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils (δαιμόνια) also came out from many.’ We notice, in connexion with the above references, that the three Evangelists distinguish between cases of demoniacal possession and those of diseases. We get little or no help from these passages to settle the question respecting the accompaniment of possession. Luke says, ‘And devils also came out from many, crying out.’ We notice, also, that the Evangelists, in describing ailments, use two terms, one of which, ἀσθενέω or κακῶς ἔχω, is translated ‘sick,’ and the other, νόσος, is translated ‘disease.’ It is perfectly clear that ‘sick’ must be used as a more general term than ‘disease,’ just as we say, ‘I have been bad with a cold,’ ‘I was ill with pneumonia.’ There is nothing in these passages to enable us to decide the nature of the diseases in question.

(8) *Various cures.* Mark i. 35–39. Jesus ‘went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out devils.’

(9) *Various cures.* Matthew iv. 23.¹ Jesus ‘went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all

¹ Others regard this verse as parallel to Mark i. 39. See *supra* (8).

manner of disease (νόσον) and all manner of sickness (μαλακίαν) among the people.' Euthymius Zigabenus (a Greek writer of the twelfth century) defines νόσος as the chronic subversion of health, μαλακία as the weakness in which it begins (like ἀσθένεια).¹

(10) *Cure of a leper.* Matthew viii. 1-4; Mark i. 40-45; Luke v. 12-16. Luke says: 'And it came to pass, while he was in one of the cities, behold, a man full of leprosy (πλήρης λέπρας): and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean (καθαρίσαι). And he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him.' Luke's expression, 'full of leprosy,' is significant; and, according to Hobart, πλήρης is frequently thus used in the medical writers.² The verb, καθαρίζειν, translated 'to cleanse' must mean here to cleanse by healing, therefore, to heal or to cure. The cleansing in the sense of declaring clean by the priest was to follow. It is not easy to determine the nature of the disease here denoted 'leprosy.' Sir Risdon Bennett is strongly of opinion that it was merely a skin disease, the modern *psoriasis*. In support of his view he states that 'no medical author, it is believed, either before or after the time of St. Luke ever used the Greek word λέπρα to denote anything but

¹ See Bruce, *Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. i. p. 94a.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

some rough scaly cutaneous disease.’¹ Again, λέπρα is the word used in the Greek version of the Old Testament to translate the לִצְרָעַת of Leviticus; and ‘it may without fear of contradiction be affirmed that scarcely any physician of the present day can see in the various features of the disease described in Leviticus anything but varieties of cutaneous disease of some kind.’² Dr. Macalister, on the other hand, is inclined to think that λέπρα in the New Testament covers ‘true leprosy,’ that is, *elephantiasis*.³ Dr. Masterman, of Jerusalem, also says: ‘It is evident, therefore, that at the time of the Gospels, λέπρα—in the classical medical sense—was primarily the well-known skin disease *psoriasis*. At the same time it is highly probable that the disease *elephantiasis*—true leprosy—together with other skin affections, e.g., *vittiligo*, *favus*, etc., were, from the point of view of ceremonial uncleanness, included in the term *lepra*, the word having, as is usual with medical terms, a much wider signification among the lay public than among the medical authors. The fact that tradition has from the earliest

¹ *The Diseases of the Bible*, 3rd ed., p. 15. Cf. Belcher, *Our Lord's Miracles of Healing*, 2nd ed., pp. 142 ff.

² *The Diseases of the Bible*, p. 39.

³ Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. iii. p. 95b. By *elephantiasis* Dr. Macalister means, of course, the $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\phi\alpha\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$ of the Greeks. *Elephantiasis* to-day is used for a disease of quite another nature (see *The Nomenclature of Diseases*, drawn up by a Joint Committee appointed by the Royal College of Physicians of London, 1906).

period pointed to true leprosy as the disease of the Bible, certainly makes it probable that it at least was one of the diseases recognized by the Rabbis as *zāra'ath*; and doubtless its specially horrible and fatal character has caused it to gradually displace all others in the popular mind.' ¹

(11) *Cure of a centurion's servant.* Matthew viii. 5-13; Luke vii. 1-10. In Matthew the servant is described as 'lying in the house sick of the palsy (παρλυτικός), grievously tormented (δεινῶς βασανιζόμενος).' Luke says that 'he was sick (κακῶς ἔχων) and at the point of death (ἤμελλεν τελευτᾶν).' The word used by Luke to describe the cure, ὑγιαίνειν, is the regular term in the medical writers for 'to be in sound health.' ²

(12) *Cure of a paralytic.* Matthew ix. 1-8; Mark ii. 1-12; Luke v. 17-26. The word used by Matthew and Mark to describe the case is παρλυτικός. Luke speaks of 'a man that was palsied (παρалеυμένος).' 'St. Luke's use,' says Hobart, 'is in strict agreement with that of the medical writers.' ³

(13) *Cure of a man with a withered hand.* Matthew xii. 9-14; Mark iii. 1-6; Luke vi. 6-11. According to

¹ Hastings, *Dict. of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. ii. p. 24b.

² Hobart, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 6. Sir Risdon Bennett says: 'That it was no slight form of disease, which might only in popular language be called palsy, is shown by the special term (παρалеυμένος) employed by the Evangelist Luke, as this is the correct technical Greek word for pronounced paralysis from disease of some part of the nervous system.' *Op. cit.*, p. 93. Cf. Belcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 69 ff.

Luke it was the right hand that was withered (ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ ἡ δεξιὰ ἦν ξηρά).

(14) *Various cures.* Matthew xii. 15–21.¹

(15) *Various cures.* Matthew iv. 24, 25; Mark iii. 7–12; Luke vi. 17–19. Matthew says: ‘And they brought unto him all that were sick (κακῶς ἔχοντας), holden with divers diseases and torments (νόσοις καὶ βασάνοις συνεχομένους), possessed with devils (δαιμονιζομένους), and epileptic (σεληνιαζομένους), and palsied (παραλυτικούς); and he healed them.’ The term ‘sick’ is general; it covers the ‘diseases’ and ‘torments.’ Three special classes of the ‘tormented’ are mentioned, namely, those ‘possessed with devils,’ the ‘epileptic,’ and the ‘palsied.’ We should notice that the demoniacs are spoken of as ‘tormented,’ an accompaniment of the possession being thus implied, and that they are distinguished from the ‘epileptic.’ The reference in Mark is indirect, and, consequently, we shall not dwell on it at present. According to Luke ‘a great number of the people . . . came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases (νόσων); and they that were troubled (ἐνοχλούμενοι) with unclean spirits (πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων) were healed. And all the multitude sought to touch him: for power came forth from him, and healed them all.’ This Evangelist’s language is again replete with medical terms.²

(16) *A widow’s son raised from the dead.* Luke vii.

¹ Many think that this passage refers to the same occasion as that described under (15).

² See Hobart, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–10.

11-17. He is described as 'one that was dead (τεθνηκώς),' and again as 'he that was dead (ὁ νεκρός).'

(17) *Various cures.* Luke vii. 18-23. 'He cured many of diseases (νόσων) and plagues (μαστιγῶν) and evil spirits (πνευμάτων πονηρῶν); and on many that were blind he bestowed sight.' Hobart says that the distinction made here of diseases into νόσοι and μάστιγες—chronic and acute—corresponds with that made by Aretaeus in his medical works.¹

(18) *Cure of a blind and dumb demoniac.* Matthew xii. 22-30.² He is described as 'one possessed with a devil (δαιμονιζόμενος), blind and dumb (τυφλὸς καὶ κωφός).'

(19) *Stilling a tempest.* Matthew viii. 18, 23-27; Mark iv. 35-41; Luke viii. 22-25.

(20) *Cure of demoniacs.* Matthew viii. 28-34; Mark v. 1-20; Luke viii. 26-39. According to Matthew two demoniacs were healed; while according to Mark and Luke there was only one. The man is described by Luke as having devils (ἔχων δαιμόνια). That the demoniac in this case is represented as suffering from mania seems to be beyond doubt: for the symptoms are those given by medical writers in connexion with mania.³

(21) *Cure of a woman with an issue of blood.* Matthew ix. 20-22; Mark v. 24b-34; Luke viii. 42b-48. Mark includes the complaint under 'plague' (μάστιξ).

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

² Many regard this passage and Matt. ix. 32-34 as doubles. See *infra* (37). ³ Hobart, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 14.

Luke says : ' And a woman having an issue of blood (οὔσα ἐν ῥύσει αἵματος) twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment : and immediately the issue of her blood stanchèd (ἔστη).' Hobart says that the phrase, ῥύσει αἵματος, is quite medical ; and that ἰστάναι, used here only in the New Testament in this sense, ' is the usual word in the medical writers to denote the stoppage of bodily discharges, and especially such as mentioned here.'¹

(22) *The raising of Jairus's daughter from the dead.* Matthew ix. 18, 19, 23-26 ; Mark v. 21-24a, 35-43 ; Luke viii. 40-42a, 49-56.

(23) *Various cures.* Matthew xiii. 53b-58 ; Mark vi. 1-6a. Mark says : ' And he could there do no mighty work (δύναμιν), save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk (ἀρρώστοις), and healed them.' Ἀρρωστία is synonymous with ἀσθένεια and μαλακία, terms already noticed.

(24) *Various cures.* Matthew ix. 35. ' And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease (νόσον) and all manner of sickness (μαλακίαν).'

(25) *Various cures.* Matthew xiv. 13, 14 ; Luke ix. 10, 11. Luke says : ' Them that had need of healing (χρείαν ἔχοντας θεραπείας) he healed.' According to

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

Hobart *θεραπεία* was the usual word in the medical writers for 'medical treatment.' ¹

(26) *Five thousand fed with five loaves and two fishes.* Matthew xiv. 13-21; Mark vi. 30-44; Luke ix. 10-17; John vi. 1-14.

(27) *Walking on the sea* (περιπατῶν ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν). Matthew xiv. 22-33; Mark vi. 45-52; John vi. 15-21.

(28) *Various cures.* Matthew xiv. 34-36; Mark vi. 53-56. Matthew says: They 'brought unto him all that were sick (κακῶς ἔχοντας); and they besought him that they might only touch the border of his garment: and as many as touched were made whole.' Mark's narrative seems to indicate a wider ministry than that of Matthew.

(29) *Cure of the daughter of a Canaanitish woman.* Matthew xv. 21-28; Mark vii. 24-30. Matthew reports the mother as saying to Jesus, 'My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil (κακῶς δαιμονίζεται).'

(30) *Cure of one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech.* Mark vii. 31-37. 'His ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.' On the strength of these last words, together with the term used to describe the case, *μογιᾶλος*, we should say that the man was not absolutely mute; though a subsequent verse seems to imply that he was. 'And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb (ἁλάλους) to speak.'

¹ *Op cit.*, p. 16.

(31) *Various cures.* Matthew xv. 29-31. 'And there came unto him great multitudes, having with them the lame (χωλούς), blind (τυφλούς), dumb (κωφούς), maimed (κυλλούς), and many others, and they cast them down at his feet; and he healed them.'

(32) *Feeding of four thousand men, beside women and children, with only seven loaves and a few small fishes.* Matthew xv. 32-39; Mark viii. 1-9.

(33) *Cure of a blind man.* Mark viii. 22-26. There is nothing to indicate that the blindness was congenital; in fact, the terms of the narrative rather imply the contrary.

(34) *Cure of an epileptic child.* Matthew xvii. 14-21; Mark ix. 14-29; Luke ix. 37-43. According to Matthew the child was an epileptic and suffered grievously (σεληνιάζεται καὶ κακῶς πάσχει). He speaks of 'the devil' as coming out of him. Mark says that he had a dumb spirit (πνεῦμα ἄλαλον); and he also represents Jesus as rebuking 'the unclean spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.'

(35) *Cure of one blind from his birth* (ἐκ γενετῆς). John ix. 1-41.

(36) *Cure of two blind men.* Matthew ix. 27-31.

(37) *Cure of a dumb demoniac.* Matthew ix. 32-34; Luke xi. 14, 15. Matthew describes the case as that of a dumb man, possessed with a devil (ἄνθρωπον κωφὸν δαιμονιζόμενον). Luke speaks of a devil that was dumb.

(38) *Cure of a woman with a spirit of infirmity.* Luke xiii. 10-17. 'And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day. And behold, a woman which had a spirit of infirmity (πνεῦμα ἀσθενείας) eighteen years; and she was bowed together, and could in no wise lift (ἀνακύψαι) herself up.' 'And when Jesus saw her, he called her, and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed (ἀπολέλυσαι) from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands upon her: and immediately she was made straight (ἀνωρθώθη).' Hobart says, 'In addition to the medical words used in describing this miracle, there are traces of medical writing. After mentioning the length of time the woman laboured under this infirmity, St. Luke states the several stages in the process of recovery—first the relaxing of the contracted muscles of the chest (ἀπολέλυσαι); and as this of itself would not have been sufficient to give her an erect posture, on account of the stiffening of the muscles through so many years, the second part of the operation is described by (ἀνωρθώθη) the removal of the curvature, and strength to stand erect.'¹

(39) *Cure of one suffering from dropsy.* Luke xiv. 1-6. 'And behold, there was before him a certain man which had the dropsy (ὕδρωπικός). . . . And he took him, and healed him.' Dr. Macalister says: 'The man is called ὕδρωπικός, the word used by the Greek physicians for dropsy in general.'²

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

² *Hastings, Dict. of the Bible*, vol. iii. p. 328a.

(40) *Raising of Lazarus from the dead.* John xi. 1-46.

(41) *Various cures.* Matthew xix. 1, 2.

(42) *Ten lepers (λεπροί) cured.* Luke xvii. 11-19.

(43) *Cure of blind Bartimaeus.* Matthew xx. 29-34 ; Mark x. 46-52 ; Luke xviii. 35-43. According to Matthew two blind men received their sight. Mark and Luke mention only one, Mark giving his name.

(44) *Cursing a fig tree.* Matthew xxi. 18, 19, 20 ; Mark xi. 12-14, 20.

(45) *Various cures.* Matthew xxi. 14. 'The blind and the lame came to him in the temple : and he healed them.'

(46) *Healing Malchus's ear.* Luke xxii. 50, 51.

We have omitted some incidents from our list which are sometimes included among the miracles of Jesus. There is, for example, the draught of fishes recorded in Luke v. 1-11, and that described in John xxi. 1-14. There is nothing in either narrative to imply an act on the part of Jesus. If there was a miraculous element present at all, it must have consisted in extraordinary knowledge. But in this Lecture we confine ourselves to the miraculous in connexion with the acts of Jesus. For a similar reason we have omitted, also, the incident of the stater in the fish's mouth.

CHAPTER II

FACE VALUE OF THE NARRATIVES

ALL the incidents mentioned in the preceding chapter possess a *prima facie* claim to be called miraculous. The process in each case appears at first sight, at any rate, to be marvellous.

But the question may legitimately be asked, Will not a closer examination of some of the narratives remove the impression that they describe what is marvellous for us to-day? Does not even their face value, correctly estimated, reduce the incidents for us to ordinary phenomena? Some answer this question in the affirmative.

If the answer is correct the 'miracles' of Jesus demand no special examination. Consequently this point must be settled before we proceed any further.

Appeal is made to Psychotherapeutics. It is not necessary for us at the present stage of our inquiry to enter into a full discussion of this subject. Later, when considering our problem from a different point of view, it will be incumbent upon us to do this.¹ But at

¹ See *infra*, book i., chapter iv.

present it will suffice to say that the mind influences the body for evil and for good. And it is maintained by some that several of our narratives, even as they stand, are capable of psychotherapeutic interpretation.

It is very important for us to be under no misapprehension as to our present problem. We are not now considering whether Jesus wrought cures through Psychotherapeutics. Our problem at present is: Taking the narratives as they stand, without modifying them in the least, have we a right to say that the alleged cures are no longer miracles? Do our narratives describe what is still marvellous for us to-day, or can they bear, exactly as they stand, a psychotherapeutic construction?

It is perfectly true that in some of the narratives of healing there is nothing which directly implies an extraordinary occurrence. When we read the account of a man born blind receiving his sight, we recognize at once a marvel. But when we are informed that Jesus 'went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people,'¹ there is nothing here which directly implies the miraculous. This general record of healing is, even as it stands, not inconsistent with the principles of Psychotherapeutics. The same remark applies to

¹ Matt. iv. 23.

others of the general accounts.¹ More than this we are not justified in saying.

But in nearly all the cases where the attempt has been made to eliminate the miraculous from narratives of special miracles, the result has been obtained through modifying the record. In one case only does Keim in his *Jesu von Nazara* succeed in lending plausibility to the psychotherapeutic explanation of special miracles without toning down the language used by the Evangelists to describe the complaint.²

It will be well for us, at this point, to indicate clearly the miraculous element present in the narratives.

Many classifications have been offered of the miracles of Jesus. The most scientific we have seen is that given by Mr. T. H. Wright. It is as follows: (1) Healings of bodily ailments; (2) Healings of nervous diseases; (3) Healings of nervous and psychical disorders; (4) Revelations of power in the nature of Christ (walking on the sea); (5) Revelation of Jesus in nature and upon the organic world (draughts of

¹ *E.g.* to Mark vi. 1-6a; Matt. ix. 35; Luke ix. 11, Matt. xiv. 14; Matt. xiv. 34-36, Mark vi. 53-56; Matt. xix. 1, 2. Consider the following also, apart from the demoniacal references, Luke iv. 40, 41, Mark i. 32-34, Matt. viii. 16, 17; Luke vi. 17-19; and the following, apart from the cases specially diagnosed, Matt. iv. 24, 25; Luke vii. 18-23; and Matt. xv. 29-31.

² Namely, the case of the woman with the issue of blood. This is the only case of special miracle which does not appear to be inconsistent with a psychotherapeutic explanation. Emotion might cure this temporarily.

fishes, and stater in fish's mouth) ; (6) Power upon organic world (multiplied loaves and fishes, water made wine, fig-tree withered) ; (7) Power upon the inorganic world (stilling of the tempest) ; (8) Raising of the dead.¹ We omitted the fifth class from our enumeration for the reason adduced.

Now, it will be easy to show that in each of the other seven classes there are cases where, taking the narratives simply as they stand, we must pronounce a miraculous element to be still present. Take the first class : healings of bodily ailments. A certain nobleman's son was sick of a fever, and was described as dying. Jesus healed him by a word spoken at a distance. Simon's wife's mother suffered from a great fever. Jesus rebuked the fever and it left her. *Psoriasis* or *Elephantiasis Graecorum*—it matters not which for our present purpose—is healed by a touch and a word. Congenital blindness is cured by rubbing the eyes with clay, the sufferer afterwards washing in the Pool of Siloam. A case of infirmity of eighteen years' standing was cured by a word and a touch. A man suffering from dropsy was healed instantaneously. One of the disciples smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear. Jesus touched his ear, and healed him. Consider next the second class : healings of nervous diseases. A helpless paralytic was cured by a command. A man with a withered hand, also, was healed forthwith by a command. A

¹ See Hastings, *Dict. of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. ii. p. 190a.

case of paralysis, in which the patient is described as being at the point of death, was cured at a distance. There is further the third class: healings of nervous and psychical disorders. Demoniacs were cured of aggravated forms of epilepsy and mania by a command or a rebuke. In all these cases, taking the narratives as we find them, we have present a miraculous element. The events belonging to the other four classes above enumerated are all miracles. No mere exegesis of the narratives can remove the impression that they describe what is still marvellous for us to-day.

Speaking generally then, the records, as they stand, are miraculous in character. And this being so, it is fair to suppose that the Evangelists did not regard differently those narratives whose face value can be claimed to be not inconsistent with a psychotherapeutic explanation.

But we may suppose some one to say that the narratives under our consideration do not imply that the events in question actually occurred. Woolston says: 'I will show that the literal history of many of the miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the Evangelists, does imply absurdities, improbabilities, and incredibilities; consequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed nowadays, but are only related as prophetic and parabolical narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.' ¹ It is maintained then by

¹ See *The Miracles of our Saviour: Six Discourses* (pub-

Woolston that a criticism of the narratives is sufficient to establish the non-historicity of the events.

But to-day the only form in which the allegory-hypothesis might be maintained, with any plausibility is this: it might be said that the Evangelists mistook allegory for history in their sources, written or oral, and as a result introduced it as such into their narrative of fact. But we have nothing to do at present with the hypothesis in this form.¹ We are concerned only with the intention of the Evangelists. Whether what they narrated was in fact historical is another question, which we may now proceed to consider.

Our problem then is, *Did Jesus perform the acts attributed to him?*

lished separately), and *Defence* of the same (in two parts). The publication of these eight pamphlets extended from 1729 to 1730. There seems to be considerable doubt as to whether Woolston was genuine in his advocacy of the allegory-hypothesis. Many think that in reality he regarded the miraculous narratives of the Gospels as frauds. This is a point, however, which we need not here endeavour to settle. The passage quoted is from *First Discourse*, 6th ed., p. 4.

¹ See *infra*, book i., chapter iv.



BOOK I

The Evidence for the Alleged Facts

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

BEFORE we proceed to discuss the evidence for the marvellous acts attributed to Jesus, it is incumbent upon us to consider whether it may not be said that such acts are impossible. If they are impossible it is useless to examine evidence with a view to discovering whether they happened or not.

We must explain what we mean by 'impossible.' A certain event A is said to be 'impossible' if there exists a certain condition B which is recognized as an insuperable obstacle to its occurrence.¹

Our question is, Can events such as the marvels enumerated above be said to be impossible?

The attitude of Science towards this question is perfectly clear. 'Strictly speaking,' Huxley said many

¹ On the meaning of 'impossible' compare Bradley, *The Principles of Logic*, pp. 197, 198. 'When we say of S—P that it cannot exist, we do not merely mean that in ideal experiment the suggestion of S—P directly vanishes. We suppose for a moment that S—P is real. Then on that hypothesis we see that the conditions from which alone S—P would follow are directly or indirectly incompatible with the real.'

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years ago, 'I am unaware of anything that has a right to the title of an "impossibility" except a contradiction in terms. There are impossibilities logical, but none natural. A "round square," a "present past," "two parallel lines that intersect," are impossibilities, because the ideas denoted by the predicates, *round*, *present*, *intersect*, are contradictions of the ideas denoted by the subjects, *square*, *past*, *parallel*. But walking on water, or turning water into wine, or procreation without male intervention, or raising the dead, are plainly not "impossibilities" in this sense.' ¹ In another work he says: 'No one who wishes to keep well within the limits of that which he has a right to assert will affirm that it is impossible that the sun and moon should ever have been made to appear to stand still in the valley of Ajalon; or that the walls of a city should have fallen down at a trumpet blast; or that water was turned into wine; because such events are contrary to uniform experience and violate laws of nature.' ²

We believe that the attitude taken by Huxley a long time ago is taken up now by all representatives of Science. The Lecturer has solicited the opinion of several leading scientific men on the matter. And they all speak with one voice. Sir Oliver Lodge says: 'As to "impossibility," nothing is *a priori* impossible but the self-contradictory. The things you speak

¹ *Science and Christian Tradition*, 1897 ed., p. 197.

² *Hume*, 1908 ed., p. 161.

about (the miracles of Jesus) are contrary to experience : there is no other impossibility about them.' ¹

It is true that the events in question have not yet been brought under any of the laws of Nature at present known. But this does not render them impossible. For 'our highest and surest generalizations,' as Huxley says, 'remain on the level of justifiable expectations ; that is very high probabilities.' ² This is the view taken to-day of the laws of Nature by all scientific men. Several of the Lecturer's scientific friends have supplied him with their views on the subject. Dr. Chatterway, F.R.S., says : 'Natural laws are only generalizations based on numberless experiences.' And Dr. Trow, F.L.S., says : 'A natural law is simply a formula to express an observed regularity of occurrences.'

And it is true that most scientific men would assert that it is highly probable that some at least of the events under our consideration, judged by the face value of the narratives, never will be brought under natural law. But this again is not regarded by Science as warranting the assertion that such events are impossible even from its point of view.

The attitude taken up by Science on our question is also the attitude assumed by Logic with regard to it. Dr. Bosanquet says : 'Against any phenomenon, any occurrence, however extraordinary, these laws

¹ In a letter, October 19, 1912.

² *Science and Christian Tradition*, p. 205.

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(the abstract "laws of thought") apart from more concrete experience, have no foothold and no purchase.' ¹ And again: 'We deny no occurrence on the strength of formal laws.' ²

We believe that Dr. Bosanquet's view on the present question is shared by all writers on Logic. Dr. Brough, in a letter to the present Lecturer, says: 'The laws of thought cannot forbid any historic fact as such.' ³

But there is another question which deserves our consideration before we proceed to discuss the evidence for the miracles of Jesus. Although neither Science nor Logic will undertake to say that such marvellous acts as are attributed to Jesus in the Gospels are impossible, still may it not be said that it is impossible to get evidence sufficiently strong to justify belief in the historicity of such events?

So far as we are aware, it is not said by any one that no testimony of our senses can suffice to establish the credibility of such events. But of course, the more extraordinary any event is, the greater should be the care taken to avoid possibility of trickery or mistake.

Further, so far as we know, it is not maintained that no testimony of witnesses can suffice to establish the historicity of events like those under our consideration, regarded merely as marvellous phenomena. No doubt, the things we speak of, as Sir Oliver Lodge says, 'are far from usual, and therefore would require exceptional

¹ *Logic*, 1st ed., vol. ii. p. 215.

² *Ibid.*

³ November 11, 1912.

testimony to substantiate them.'¹ But no student of history maintains that it is *a priori* impossible to obtain satisfactory evidence.²

Since it is not maintained that events such as those enumerated above are impossible, and since it is not maintained that it is impossible to obtain evidence sufficiently strong to establish the historicity of such events, we may proceed to examine the evidence in our possession with regard to the miracles of Jesus.

¹ Letter, October 19, 1912.

² See Huxley, *Science and Christian Tradition*, and Hume.

CHAPTER II

THE GOSPELS : DATES

WE may lay it down as a canon that, all other things being equal, the trustworthiness of evidence increases as the distance in time between it and the alleged event diminishes. Nearness in time does not of necessity guarantee the truth of testimony ; but the nearer it is in time to the event which it claims to substantiate, all other things being equal, the more reliable it is.

We proceed then to discuss the dates of the four Gospels.

It is not certain whether there is any reference, explicit or implicit, to the Gospels as four in number earlier than about the middle of the second century.¹

We are able, however, to trace the influence of the individual Gospels for about forty years further back

¹ For a discussion of this point see Taylor, *The Witness of Hermas to the Four Gospels* (1892) ; Nicol, *The Four Gospels in the Earliest Church History* (1908) ; Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, Part I (1903) ; and *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (1905), by A Committee of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology.

than 150. Much labour has been spent on this investigation by several writers.¹ Dr. Stanton considers that *The Epistle to the Corinthians* by Clement of Rome is the earliest Christian document which we possess outside the Canon. He assigns as a date for it the year 95 or 96. The seven *Epistles* (in the shorter Greek form) of Ignatius he allocates to the period between 110 and 115; and he thinks that Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians* was written soon after. The conclusion at which he arrives after a detailed examination of these Letters is that there are indications that Clement was acquainted with Matthew and Luke, Ignatius with Matthew, and Polycarp with each of the Synoptic Gospels. He finds no clear sign in Clement that he knew John's Gospel. And all which can be said about Ignatius and Polycarp is that certain phenomena in their writings 'point to acquaintance with it.'²

But, external evidence is not our only guide in determining the dates of the Gospels. Internal evidence, also, is of great assistance.

And as a result of a study of the evidence, both external and internal, it is now pretty generally agreed among experts that our first three Gospels must have

¹ See Westcott, *Canon of the New Testament*, Index II; Sanday, *The Gospels in the Second Century*, Index II; Dale, *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*; Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, Part I; Nicol, *The Gospels in the Earliest Church History*; and *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, by the Committee mentioned above.

² See *op. cit.*, pp. 3-28. Cf. *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, Tables I and II.

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been written, speaking roughly, between the years 60 and 90.¹ It is agreed also, though not so generally, that the Fourth Gospel must have been composed not much, if at all, later than the year 100.

This is not all, however, which we are able to say about the dates of the Gospels. We have not yet tried to determine the relation of the first three Gospels to one another. A comparison of the Synoptic Gospels reveals resemblances and differences. An examination of each of the three, also, shows signs of composite origin. Out of these facts there arises what is known as the Synoptic Problem. We shall refer to the latest opinion of experts on this question, in so far as there is a fairly general agreement among them.

It is generally agreed that Mark's Gospel, substantially in its present form, was used by both Matthew and Luke in drawing up their Gospels. This makes the Second Gospel earlier than the First and Third. Now, Mark's Gospel, as we have already seen, is replete with the miraculous. With respect to date, Harnack says that 'everything that stands in this gospel was

¹ Some critics assign a much earlier date to the Synoptics. Thus, Willoughby C. Allen assigns Matthew to c. 50, and he says: 'I think it probable that critical opinion will shortly move in the direction of, say 60 A.D., as suggested by Harnack for the Third Gospel, and 50 A.D., or shortly before, for the first publication of a Greek Second Gospel.' *The Expository Times* (July, 1910), pp. 439-444. See also the same critic in *The Expository Times* (May, 1911), pp. 349-352. Cf. Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 294, 296, and especially, *Date of the Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 124, 126, 133, 134.

already in circulation before the year 70 A.D., or, as others think, soon afterwards.' ¹

But we are able to go still further in the matter. It is believed by several scholars that Mark's Gospel as we have it to-day is composite. We need not examine the truth of this theory; it will be sufficient for us to discuss our special subject in the light of it. Dr. Emil Wendling believes that three hands are traceable in the Gospel.² To M¹ we owe the primitive Mark-Gospel. This document was worked over and interpolated by a later writer, M². Then the Evangelist touched up the work of M², adding information from some other source. Dr. Wendling has separated the material which we owe to each of these three authors. Looking at the document which we owe to M¹ we find in it three of the miraculous narratives of our list, namely, (5), (6), and (12), in precisely the form in which we find them in Mark's Gospel. The Evangelist has not tampered with these in the least degree. In the case of (7), (10), and (13), the Evangelist has added slight touches to the narrative of M¹; but in no case has he inserted a miracle where there was none before. The narrative of the feeding of the five thousand, (26), is due to M¹ and M², the part of it coming from M¹ not being miraculous. To M² alone we owe (19), (20),

¹ *Luke the Physician*, p. 161. Cf. *Date of the Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 126, 133.

² See *Ur-Marcus* (1905); also, *Die Entstehung des Marcus-Evangeliums* (1908).

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(21), and (43). In the case of (22) and (34), the Evangelist has added a little to the narrative of M², but he has not thereby affected in the least degree its miraculous character. We are indebted to the Evangelist alone for (8), (15), (23), (27), (28), (29), (30), (32), (33), and (44).

The most important point to bear in mind in connexion with the above summary of Dr. Wendling's hypothesis is that we get three miraculous narratives from M¹, and four from M², in precisely the form in which we find them in our present Gospel.

If Mark's Gospel was already in circulation by the year 70, it is clear that the earlier documents must have been written some time before that year. With regard to the primitive Gospel, Dr. Wendling thinks that it goes back either to Peter himself or to a member of his circle.¹ The contribution of M², also, he believes, is partially based on a living tradition concerning Jesus.²

The conclusion then is that, on Dr. Wendling's hypothesis, we are in possession of documents, con-

¹ His words are : ' Auch wenn wir von dem Papiaszeugnis völlig absehen, weist ein Bericht wie der vom Sabbat in Kaper-naum in seiner schlichten Anspruchslosigkeit und Unabsichtlich-keit auf beste Ueberlieferung aus dem Kreise des Petrus, und nichts ist wahrscheinlicher, als dass er geradezu auf Petrus selbst zurückgeht.' *Ur-Marcus*, p. 26.

² ' Aber ganz ohne Anlehnung an die lebendige Tra-dition über Jesus kann er kaum geschrieben haben, wenn es auch ein vergebliches Bemühen bleiben wird, den historischen Kern seiner Erzählungen herauszufinden.' *Ibid.*

taining miraculous narratives, the date of which is considerably prior to the year 70.¹

Again: it is very generally believed that Matthew and Luke made use of another Greek document (or an oral tradition tantamount to a written source). This is usually denoted by the letter Q (Quelle). There are diverse opinions as to the content of Q. Harnack has attempted a reconstruction of the document.² The same thing has been done by B. Weiss.³ The Q of the latter is considerably longer than that of the former.⁴

The important question for us is: Did Q contain miraculous narrative? According to Harnack it did. In his reconstruction we discover (11) and (18) of our list.⁵ Jülicher, also, includes the cure of the Centurion's servant in Q.⁶ In fact we do not know of any

¹ See another hypothesis, akin to that of Wendling, in Bacon, *The Beginnings of Gospel Story* (1909).

² *The Sayings of Jesus* (1908), pp. 127-146.

³ *Die Quellen der Synoptischen Überlieferung* (1908), pp. 1-74.

⁴ See also Allen in *Expository Times*, July, 1909. Dr. V. Bartlet in *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem* (1911), pp. 326, 331 ff., 359 ff., argues that a common apostolic tradition of deeds as well as words of Jesus lies behind all our Synoptics, as distinct from a Q confined almost entirely to discourses.

⁵ *The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 131, 132, and 136. Compare Sir John Hawkins and B. H. Streeter, in *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, pp. 114, 128, 218.

⁶ 'Und am schlechtesten fügt sich in die herrschende Logien-Vorstellung Mt. viii. 5-13, Lc. vii. 1-10, xiii. 28 f., die Geschichte vom Hauptmann zu Kapernaum, dessen Knecht Jesus aus der Ferne heilt.' *Einleitung in das N. T.* (1906), p. 313.

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one who denies that this narrative was a part of Q. Harnack leaves out the reference to blindness in the case of the demoniac. B. Weiss, in his reconstruction of Q, includes thirteen of our miraculous narratives, namely, in the order in which he arranges them, (10), (11), (21), (22), (19), (20), (12), (36), (25), (26), (29), (37), and (34).¹

Respecting the date of Q, Professor Kirsopp Lake of Leiden says: 'It is probably not too much to say that every year after 50 A.D. is increasingly improbable for the production of Q.'² Harnack holds that Q was originally written in Aramaic, and that it belongs to the apostolic circle. It is, he thinks, more ancient than St. Mark. But he goes further than this. 'There is a strong balance of probability,' he says, 'that Q is a work of St. Matthew.'³ Jülicher, also, finds for Q an Aramaic original, written between 60 and 70.⁴

Some think that use was made of Q by Mark, and that the Evangelists used different editions of it; but these are details which need not detain us.

¹ See *Die Quellen der Synoptischen Überlieferung*, Q, ii. 22, 23; 24-26; 27b, 28; 27a, 29; iii. 10; 11; 12; 13; iv. 17; 18; 19; v. 3; vii. 4. See also by the same author, *Die Quellen des Lukasevangeliums* (1907).

² *Expositor*, June, 1909, p. 507.

³ *The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 247-249.

⁴ 'Wir werden dem Tatbestand am besten gerecht, wenn wir mit aller Vorsicht im einzelnen für Q eine zwischen 60 und 70 verfasste aramäische Urschrift, eine nicht zu lange nachher entstandene griechische Uebersetzung . . . annehmen.' *Einleitung*, p. 315.

What is important for us to bear in mind here again is this, that, on the assumption that such a document (or body of tradition) as Q ever existed, we have miracles attributed to Jesus at a period considerably earlier than 70.

Further : it is believed by several authorities that, in addition to Mark and Q, Luke drew from another source of information. Harnack does not think it probable that this additional source existed in writing. The traditions, he maintains, had their origin in Jerusalem or Judæa. To these Harnack attributes the story of the widow of Nain, and that of the woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years.¹ B. Weiss, on the other hand, thinks that these traditions must have been committed to writing before they reached Luke, and he calls the document L (Lukasquelle). He has attempted a complete reconstruction of it. L, as reconstructed by Weiss, contains seven of our miraculous narratives, namely, (11), (16), (17), (39), (38), (42), and (46).²

Those who have given special attention to the subject mostly agree that L was written in Judæa, and that it originated in a Jewish-Christian circle.³ Weiss

¹ *Luke the Physician*, pp. 152 ff.

² *Die Quellen der Synoptischen Überlieferung*, L. ii. 6, 7 25-27; 28; iii. 6-8; 31; 41; iv. 21.

Cf. on the subject of this paragraph, P. Feine, *Eine vorkanonische Überlieferung des Lukas* (1891); Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, part ii. (1909), pp. 220 ff., especially 239 f.; Vernon Bartlet in *Oxford Studies*, Essay XI.

³ E.g. B. Weiss. 'Immerhin ist diese Einführung der

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thinks also that the writer was indebted for several of the traditions to Mary.¹

The conclusion of our present discussion, then, is this. It is almost certain that Mark, substantially as we have it, is not later than 70 A.D. All the experts are agreed that some such document (or stereotyped tradition) as Q existed, and that it contained accounts of miracles. The composition of it is fixed by all before the year 70, and by some considerably earlier than that year. There is also wide agreement that Luke used a written source or sources (L) for the narratives peculiar to his Gospel, which contained accounts of miracles. The date of L also is fixed before 70. Thus we have three lines of tradition prior to 70 in support of the miracles of Jesus.

Stadt (see Luke i. 26) am verständlichsten, wenn der Verfasser in Judäa und für Judäer schreibt. . . . Dass nach alledem die Quelle aus judenchristlichen Kreisen stammt, liegt auf der Hand.' *Die Quellen der S.Ü.*, pp. 172, 173.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-174.

CHAPTER III

THE GOSPELS : WRITERS AND AUTHORITIES

WE have seen that, all other things being equal, the value of evidence increases as the distance between it and the alleged event diminishes. Considerations of time, then, are of great importance in estimating the worth of evidence. But the reliance to be placed on any particular evidence depends also on the person who tenders it. For one thing, the greater the opportunities which the witness possessed of knowing the facts of the case, the greater, all other things being equal, is the worth of his testimony. And further, the credibility of evidence depends on the character borne by the witness in respect to intelligence, honesty, and truthfulness.¹

It becomes important for us, consequently, to investigate the problem of the authorship of the documents in which the miracles of Jesus are recorded,

¹ Cf. Best, *The Principles of the Law of Evidence*. 'The credibility of a witness is always in issue; and accordingly general evidence is receivable to show that the character which he bears is such that he is unworthy to be believed, even when upon his oath' (p. 237).

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and to determine, if possible, the authorities upon whom the Evangelists relied.

As to the First Gospel, which might be thought to claim an eye-witness as its author, the title 'according to Matthew' does not of itself involve this; while on grounds of internal evidence there is a very general agreement among critics that Matthew could not have been its author.¹

Regarding the Third Gospel, the *Muratorian Fragment*, written about 170-200, speaks of Luke, the physician, as its author.² Irenæus, too, in the last quarter of the second century, refers explicitly to the Four Gospels, naming Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John as the authors.³ Stanton ventures to trace the external evidence to a still earlier writer. 'The belief that the author of this Gospel was Luke, the companion of St. Paul, who is referred to three times in Epistles of the New Testament, may with great probability be traced back, at least as far as the time of Justin Martyr.'⁴ Considering the matter, again, from the standpoint of internal evidence, the argument in favour of the Lucan authorship is very strong. Briefly put, it is this: (1) The author of the 'We'-passages in the Book of Acts was a companion of Paul;

¹ The authorship of Q is discussed later in the present chapter.

² For the words of the *Fragment* see Westcott's *Canon* (4th ed.), Appendix C, p. 516.

³ *Against Heresies*, III. xi. 7.

⁴ *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, part ii. p. 240.

(2) the author of the 'We'-passages was the author of the whole book; (3) the author of Acts was also the author of the Third Gospel; and (4) Luke, the 'beloved physician' (Col. iv. 14), meets admirably the necessities of the case. These points have been supported with great learning by several writers.¹ We may say, then, in conclusion, that there is a very strong presumption in favour of regarding Luke as the author of the Third Gospel.

With regard to the Second Gospel, the earliest external witness is Papias. The passage quoted by Eusebius is so important that we shall give it in full. 'And the Elder said this also: Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without however recording in order what was either said or done by Christ. For neither did he hear the Lord, nor did he follow Him; but afterwards, as I said, (attended) Peter, who adapted his instructions to the needs (of his hearers), but had no design of giving a connected account of the Lord's oracles. So then Mark made no mistake, while he thus wrote down some things as he remembered them, for he made it his one care not to omit anything that he heard, or to set down any false statement therein.'²

¹ See Hobart, *The Medical Language of St. Luke*; Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, Part III, C, Div. I; Harnack, *Luke the Physician*; Ramsay, *Luke the Physician*; and Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, Part II.

² Lightfoot's translation. See *Apostolic Fathers*, 1891, p. 517. For the original see *Eusebius*, iii. 39.

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There does not seem to be any reason for doubting that the reference in the above quotation is to our Second Gospel. And it should be noticed that Papias gives 'the Elder' as his authority for the statement he makes. Papias, also, according to Eusebius, speaks of 'John the Elder'; and it is natural to suppose that 'the Elder' and 'John the Elder' were one and the same person. 'John the Elder' was not the 'Apostle John'; but he also was a personal disciple of Jesus. We should now consider if the Gospel itself supplies any confirmation of the view that it was written, substantially as we have it, by Mark the companion of Peter (1 Pet. v. 13). After a careful examination of the contents of the Gospel, Stanton comes to the conclusion that 'in St. Mark as we have it there are a certain number of passages and phrases which appear to be interpolations.'¹ But, after removing these interpolations, the Gospel remains substantially the same. And with regard to this primitive-Mark, Stanton says: 'The character of this original work is such as might have been expected from one who had been a constant hearer of an immediate disciple of Jesus, and consequently it may be attributed to the Mark who is named by Papias, and who is, there can be little doubt, the person to whom all the allusions to a Mark in the New Testament refer.'² We see no reason for doubting this conclusion.

¹ *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, part ii. p. 202.

² *Ibid.*, p. 203. See also Salmon, in Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iii. pp. 256-258.

We may now proceed to discuss the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. The earliest external authority quoted in support of the view that this Gospel was composed by John, one of the twelve, is Theophilus, bishop of Antioch. About A.D. 180 he wrote three books *Ad Autolyicum*. In one of them he quotes from the Fourth Gospel, including it among the books of 'the Holy Scriptures,' and naming John as the author.¹ The evidence of Irenæus to like effect is of about the same date, but seems to go back through him to Polycarp of Smyrna, whom he knew in his youth in Asia about 150 or so. But internal evidence does not altogether favour this tradition.

The following points have recently been argued in connexion with the author: (1) He is a Jew, (2) writing for non-Jewish readers; (3) He is familiar with Palestine (and especially Jerusalem), and its Jewish customs and institutions; (4) He is presumably an eye-witness of the Ministry, (5) a man of Greek culture and a philosopher, with a working knowledge of Philo's philosophy.² Whether John, the son of Zebedee, was a man of Greek culture depends partly on the question whether he left Palestine. It is maintained that there is an early tradition to the effect that he spent a long period of his life at Ephesus. But the evidence on this point is not such as to place the matter beyond dispute. The writer of the Gospel is

¹ *Ad Autolyicum*, ii. 22.

² Cohu, *The Gospels and Modern Research*, 1909, pp. 469 ff.

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thought by many to claim to be an eye-witness of the facts which he narrates.¹ And Dr. Sanday lays great emphasis upon the 24th verse of the last chapter as corroborative evidence of 'the autoptic character of the Gospel.'² He believes that this chapter, with the exception of the last two verses, was written by the same hand as the rest of the book. Towards the end of the chapter we read that 'Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned back on his breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee? Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?'³ Then, as Sanday thinks, there was added at a later date by another hand the words: 'This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true.'⁴ It is contended by some⁵ that 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' was not John, the son of Zebedee. But the

¹ See i. 14 and xix. 35.

² *The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 80 ff.

³ xxi. 20-23.

⁴ Verse 24.

⁵ E.g. Delff in *Geschichte des Rabbi Jesus von Nazareth; Das vierte Evangelium wiederhergestellt*; and *Neue Beiträge zur Kritik und Erklärung des vierten Evangeliums*.

difficulties of the case are no fewer, to say the least, on this view than they are on the common view which identifies the two persons. The real issue is that between a direct or only indirect apostolic authorship. Hence we feel justified in concluding that it is probable that the Fourth Gospel at any rate embodies in some sense the witness of the son of Zebedee, even if its actual author was a disciple of his, trained in a rather different circle.

Having dealt in the preceding paragraphs with the authorship of the Gospels, practically in the form in which we have them to-day, we are in a position to discuss the authorship of their constituent elements.

We have already referred to L, supposed to be one of the lost sources of Luke's Gospel. Harnack, as we have seen, does not regard it as a written source. Speaking of the traditions contained in L, he says, 'It is therefore, perhaps, not too presumptuous to assign these traditions to Philip and his four prophesying daughters.'¹ Weiss, on the other hand, as we have seen, thinks that L was written, that it originated in a Jewish Christian circle, and that Mary, the mother of Jesus, supplied several of the traditions.²

Wendling speaks of the primitive Mark-Gospel as

¹ *Luke the Physician*, p. 155. For Philip and his daughters see Acts xxi. 8, 9. Bartlet, in *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, pp. 350 ff., also makes Philip the witness behind L, suggesting that Luke may have reduced it to writing from his lips.

² *Supra*, the preceding chapter.

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one of the constituent elements of our Second Gospel. And, without actually assigning its authorship to Peter, he makes him responsible, directly or indirectly, for its contents.¹

As we have seen already, it is pretty generally believed that Matthew and Luke made use of a written document, which critics denote by the letter Q. From internal evidence it is believed that this document consisted mainly of discourses delivered by Jesus. Papias refers to a document containing what he calls the Lord's 'oracles.'² And many experts conclude that Q must have been the writing mentioned by Papias.³ But Papias speaks of Matthew as having compiled 'the oracles.' Consequently, if we may identify 'the oracles' with Q,⁴ we have strong evidence in support of assigning the latter to Matthew, one of the twelve. On this point Harnack says: 'Seeing that our St. Matthew cannot have been composed by an Apostle, and that the tradition: *Ματθαῖος Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ τὰ λόγια συνετάξατο*, already dates from about A.D. 100, there is a strong balance of probability that Q is a work of St. Matthew, but more cannot be said.'⁵

¹ *Supra*, pp. 50, 51.

² Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, iii. 39. Περὶ δὲ τοῦ Ματθαίου ταῦτ' εἴρηται· Ματθαῖος μὲν οὖν Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ τὰ λόγια συνεγράψατο. Ἑρμῆνευσεν δ' αὐτὰ, ὡς ἦν δυνατός, ἕκαστος (Bright's ed.).

³ See Sanday, *Expository Times*, Dec., 1908, p. 110b.

⁴ This is doubted by some, who hold that Papias means simply Matthew's Gospel in an assumed Aramaic form, as containing 'the oracles' on some of which he comments.

⁵ *The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 248, 249.

In this connexion we ought to mention the fact that Luke, in the prologue to his Gospel, states that the narratives which many had taken in hand to draw up, were based upon the tradition of those 'which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.'¹ This tradition, no doubt, was mainly oral; but it is quite possible that it may have been in part written.

The conclusions, therefore, to which we seem justified in coming, are the following: (1) That there is a strong balance of evidence in support of attributing the authorship of the Third and Second² Gospels to Luke and John Mark respectively; (2) that it is probable that the Fourth Gospel embodies the witness of John, the son of Zebedee; (3) that it is highly probable that Peter is responsible, in some way or other, for much that is found in our Second Gospel, including several of the miraculous narratives; and (4) that there is a strong balance of probability that Matthew was, if not the author of, at any rate the authority behind, one of the primitive sources of the Gospels, a source which contained narratives of miracles.

Thus there is good reason for supposing that we have the testimony, direct or indirect, of some of the first disciples on behalf of the miracles of Jesus.

It will be well for us now to estimate the character of the men who supply the testimony, and to discuss

¹ i. 1-4.

² Or, as others would say, its nucleus.

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the opportunities which they had of knowing the facts of the case.

With regard to Luke, our direct knowledge is but scanty. He is mentioned three times by name in the New Testament.¹ He is called 'the beloved physician' and described as a companion and fellow-worker of the Apostle Paul. The Epistle to the Colossians implies that he was a Gentile: probably he was a Greek. According to Philemon he had Mark for a companion for a period; and a prospect of the same companionship is mentioned in the Second Epistle to Timothy. This is a fact of which due notice should be taken. On the assumption that these men wrote two of our Gospels, it is impossible not to believe that they must have discussed together the events of the life of Jesus. But the direct references to Luke do not exhaust our sources of information concerning him. If, as is believed by many, he wrote the 'We'-passages in the book of Acts, our knowledge of him is very much enlarged. It is not necessary for us to trace his history as set forth in these passages. It will suffice for us to mention the important fact that in company with Paul he visited Jerusalem and was apparently with him for two years in Cæsarea. The fact that Luke was a physician justifies the belief that he must have been a man of some culture. The comparative excellence of his Greek, especially in the preface to his Gospel, is a fact frequently noticed by critics. Luke's accuracy

¹ Col. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 11; and Philem. 24.

as a historian in Acts has been amply proved through the discoveries made in Asia Minor by Mr. J. T. Wood, Sir William Ramsay, and others.¹

We have three references in the New Testament to a John whose surname was Mark, two to the same individual under the name of John simply, and four references to a Mark simply.² It is now pretty generally agreed that John Mark of Acts and Mark of Paul's Epistles refer to one and the same person. And there is no ground for believing that this person is not also the Mark referred to by Peter as 'my son.' What is of chief interest to us just now is the connexion of Mark with Peter. According to Acts, Mark lived, about A.D. 44, with his mother in Jerusalem. Mary, the mother of Mark, could not have been poor, for she kept one servant, at least, and lived in a fairly large house, with a porch. The followers of Jesus were accustomed to meet at her house. It was there that Peter went after his escape from prison; and he must have been a frequent visitor, for the maid knew his voice, and 'opened not the gate for joy.' Judging from the social position of his mother, we may gather that John Mark received a good education, probably among the Jewish colony of Cyprists, to which also belonged Barnabas, his uncle.

¹ In 1909 the Lecturer had an opportunity of testing the accuracy of the local touches in Acts xix. during a visit to Ephesus.

² See Acts xii. 12, 25, xv. 37; xiii. 5, 13; Col. iv. 10 2 Tim. iv. 11, Philem. 24, and 1 Pet. v. 13.

John was the son of Zebedee. He and his father were fishermen, and belonged to Galilee. According to Mark, they kept hired servants.¹ From this fact it is inferred that they were people of some means. In conjunction with his brother James, he was called to follow Jesus. His brother James, Peter, and himself formed a kind of inner circle among the band of disciples. These three witnessed the raising of Jairus's daughter from the dead, the Transfiguration, and the agony in Gethsemane. John was closely associated with Peter on other occasions. According to Luke it was Peter and John whom Jesus sent to prepare the passover.² John is not mentioned by name in the Fourth Gospel. But he is generally identified with 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' referred to in that Gospel, and whose witness it distinctly claims to embody.

Peter, also, was a fisherman, belonging to Galilee. His home seems to have been originally at Bethsaida.³ But, during the Gospel period, Peter lived at Capernaum, and his mother-in-law, as well as his brother Andrew, appear to have lived with him. According to Luke, Peter possessed a boat of his own, and was in partnership with the sons of Zebedee.⁴ The connexion of Peter with John and Mark has been already noticed in the preceding paragraphs. He was always to the fore, both in word and action. According to the Gospel of John, it was Peter that struck off Malchus's

¹ i. 20.

² xxii. 8.

³ John i. 44.

⁴ Luke v. 3, 10.

right ear in the garden of Gethsemane. Peter is represented in the Gospels as very intimately associated with Jesus from the day of his call to the end. Speaking of Peter's character, Latham says that he 'had a turn of mind which was specially his own. He arrived at steadfast conviction not by reasoning from step to step—this was a mental process rarely practised by Galilaean fishers—but by inward intuition, after his own strong Hebrew sort. When an impulse seized on him it must have its way, and when his heart was full of a matter he must pour it out.' ¹

The references to Matthew in the New Testament are very few. His call to be a follower of Jesus is given in each of the Synoptic Gospels, though he is sometimes called Matthew and sometimes Levi. The account of the call is given by Luke as follows: 'And after these things he went forth, and beheld a publican, named Levi, sitting at the place of toll, and said unto him, Follow me. And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him.' ² Matthew, then, was a customs-officer, having his office at or near Capernaum 'on the great West Road from Damascus to the Mediterranean.' Here he would be in touch with the latest information from all parts of the country. Seeing that he was a customs-officer, we are justified in supposing that Matthew was able to write, and that he was business-like in his habits.

¹ *Pastor Pastorum* (5th thousand), p. 244. ² v. 27, 28.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE NARRATIVES

WE have seen that the face value of the narratives under discussion involves the miraculous even for us to-day. We have also come to the conclusion that the Evangelists intended to convey the impression that they were writing 'literal history,' and that there are good grounds for supposing that we have the testimony, direct or indirect, of some of the first disciples of Jesus in support of his miracles. We may now proceed to consider whether the narratives may not be so explained as to justify the assertion that the alleged events never happened as recorded.

(A.) Several writers contend that 'some deduction' may be made from the face value of the narratives under consideration. The methods by which it is attempted to make the deduction are various.

(1) *Assimilation*. It is contended that certain features in the narratives are due to assimilation. With regard to the account in Matthew ix. 27-31 of the healing of two blind men, Mr. J. M. Thompson says, 'The story may be a variant of that of the blind

man at Jericho, or it may be a *cento* from various sources. In either case assimilation has probably taken place, and accounts for some of the more Marcan features, e.g., "Son of David"; "the house" (i.e., St. Peter's house at Capernaum?); the insistence on faith; the touching of the eyes; the attempt to secure silence; and the man's disobedience.¹ Again, with regard to Luke's account of the healing of the centurion's servant, Mr. Thompson says: 'It seems likely, indeed, that Luke's transcription of Q has been largely modified by assimilation to the stories of Jairus, and of the centurion Cornelius in Acts.'² He supposes assimilation to have taken place also in connexion with the narrative of the feeding of the five thousand. His explanation is as follows: 'Suppose an original incident, the exact nature of which we cannot now determine, but which must have been remarkable enough to impress itself upon the memory of the apostles, to be compared with the stories of the Old Testament prophets (1 Kings xvii. 8-16; 2 Kings iv. 42-44), and to be regarded at a comparatively early date as a miracle. This incident may have been transformed, by the pious imagination of a later generation, into the original institution of the Agapê and Eucharist. Then the account of it would be assimilated to the actual experience of Christian worship. At the Eucharist, which might sometimes be held out of doors, and at

¹ *Miracles in the New Testament* (1911), pp. 74, 75.

² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

which the congregation would naturally be arranged in groups, Jesus Himself was still present among His friends ; still, as Head of the Family of the faithful, blessed and brake the bread ; still miraculously satisfied the utmost needs of all who came.' ¹

We notice that all Mr. Thompson can say in support of the doctrine of assimilation is : ' Assimilation has probably taken place ' ; ' it seems likely ' ; and ' this incident may have been transformed. . . . Then the account of it would be assimilated.' But even if we grant that assimilation has taken place in the narratives in question, we do not thereby remove the miraculous from them.

(2) *Symbolism*. This subject has received considerable attention from Dr. Sanday. He defines symbolism as follows : ' Symbolism, I think it may be said, is *indirect description* ; in other words, it is description or expression by a system of equivalents, in which the terms or media employed do not at once call up the features of the object, but rather suggest them by calling up the features of some other object like that which it is sought to describe, or which is treated as like it, and for the moment is taken to stand for it.' ² Dr. Sanday believes that ' the whole Bible is full of symbolism.' ³ As to the presence of symbolism in the narratives under consideration by us, he says : ' Both

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 47.

² *The Life of Christ in Recent Research* (1907), pp. 3, 4. See also *Christologies Ancient and Modern* (1910), Lecture IX.

³ *The Official Report of the Church Congress* (1912), p. 182.

the ancients who wrote the Gospels and evangelical documents and we moderns are to this extent on the same footing, that they had, and we have, to *recover* what had happened after the event. At the time when the events happened nobody was thinking of making any permanent record of them. In other words, there were no snapshot photographs. And when the attempt to set down a permanent record was made, the thread had been partially lost. The interval had not been long ; let us say that it was from fifteen to thirty years. But it was long enough for the record to be coloured more or less by the ideas that were in people's minds. Here comes in that tendency of which I spoke towards what I called symbolical expression. It was just the best and most religious minds that were insensibly led to work up their presentation of events in this manner.' ¹

Dr. Sanday gives no instances of symbolism in connexion with the miracles of Jesus. But Mr. Thompson has entered into details with regard to the subject. He finds several traces of symbolism in connexion with the narratives of miracles given in John's Gospel. Speaking of the turning of water into wine, he says : ' And the evidential motive is less strong than another—the symbolical. The changing of water into wine may symbolize the process of religious conversion, when by Jesus' supernatural power human nature is transformed into divine. Or it may symbolize the substitution of the Gospel for the Law through the

¹ *Report*, pp. 183, 184.

preaching of Christ.' ¹ He explains also the symbolical meaning of the story of the infirm man at Bethesda.² With regard to John's account of the walking on the lake, Mr. Thompson says: 'One new point is, however, added. Jesus did not actually enter the boat; but when they were willing that He should do so, "straight-way the boat was at the land whither they were going." This change . . . may also be partly due to symbolism. The boat is the congregation of the faithful. Jesus, from an external position of superiority, tests their faith. Their recognition of Him is immediately rewarded by achievement at the end of the journey.'³ Again, as to the cure of a man born blind, 'The symbolical meaning of the incident is obvious'; and as to the raising of Lazarus, 'The symbolical motive is no less clear than the miraculous.'⁴ Mr. Thompson speaks of the Evangelist's 'love of symbolism,' and says that it follows from this 'that the actual circumstances of the miracles are of little importance to him—provided that their miraculousness is beyond question—except to furnish analogies to the spiritual world.'⁵

But it is not in the Fourth Gospel alone that Mr. Thompson finds traces of symbolism. Referring to Matthew's account of the walking on the lake, he says: 'Notice how St. Matthew carries the symbolism still

¹ *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 104.

² *Ibid.*, p. 105.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 107.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 109.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

further, and adds to the general appearance to the apostles the special appearance to St. Peter. The incident was regarded as St. Peter's restitution to favour after his denial: it is this idea which determines the form of St. Matthew's addition to the present passage.' ¹ Again, he says with regard to Luke's narrative of the raising of the widow's son: 'There is some likelihood in the suggestion that, as the centurion's servant represents the Gentiles, converted at a distance by the power of Christ, so the widow's son of Nain is a type of the Jewish Church, the only son of the widowed daughter of Zion, Jerusalem, which is raised by the miraculous touch of Christ to a new life.' ²

Even Mark may not be free from symbolism. Respecting the account of the walking on the lake, even in the form in which it is found in the earliest Gospel, Mr. Thompson says: 'It is possible that both the survival (not the origin) of the story, and the form in which it has survived, are due to the symbolical interpretation put upon it by the Early Church.' ³ In a later work, he says: 'From this survey we bring back, for the solution of the crucial miracles in St. Mark, two suggestions. . . . The other is that symbolism, in the sense of the interpretation of historical narrative in the light of immediate religious and ecclesiastical interests, may have played a more important part in the formation of the Gospels than is generally allowed.' ⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴ *Through Facts to Faith* (1912), p. 27.

Now, we need raise no objection to the contention that the narratives of the miracles of Jesus suggest spiritual truths. Nor need we object to the assertion that the motive which explains the inclusion of certain miracles in John's Gospel is to be found in their spiritual suggestiveness.¹ The only question which needs discussion is whether any features in the narratives originated in symbolism. With regard to this point all we get from Mr. Thompson is: 'This change . . . may also be partly due to symbolism'; 'there is some likelihood in the suggestion'; and 'it is possible.' But even if we grant that symbolism is accountable for certain features in the narratives the marvellous is not thereby eliminated from them.

(3) *Heightening*. By 'heightening' is meant 'the changes which have come into the narratives through the zeal or the stupidity of a long series of scribes.'² Mr. Thompson has considered this subject very fully. He finds traces of the process in John's Gospel. With regard to the new point in its account of the walking on the lake, he says: 'This change—whether it means that the last part of the journey by boat was miraculously accelerated, or that Jesus walked right across the lake—is partly due to a desire to emphasize Jesus' power.'³

But it is in Matthew and Luke that we study this

¹ See Westcott, *Commentary*, 12th thousand, pp. lxxv.-lxxvii.

² *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 107.

subject to the best advantage. 'We shall see some important instances of it in the editing of Mark by St. Matthew and St. Luke.'¹

In connexion with the miracles of healing, Matthew is supposed to have heightened the account given in Mark in three respects, namely, in respect of the nature of the case that is cured, the method of treatment, and the result. 'Under the first head comes St. Matthew's . . . doubling of the Gerasene demoniac and the blind men at Jericho ; the description of the Syro-Phœnician woman's daughter as " grievously vexed " with a devil ; of the epileptic boy in similar terms. As regards the method of treatment, St. Peter's wife's mother is raised by a mere touch ; spirits are cast out by a word ; a single command is enough to exorcise the Gadarene demoniac ; Jairus's daughter is raised by a touch, without a word ; and the epileptic boy is cured by a single rebuke addressed to the spirit possessing him. Thirdly, as regards the results of the cures, where Mark says that Jesus healed " many " cases, Matthew says that He healed " all " ; and whereas Mark says of the visit to Nazareth that " He could there do no mighty work," St. Matthew alters this to " He did not many mighty works there." Similarly, cures that might be thought incomplete in Mark are made complete in Matthew : the withered hand is restored " whole as the other " ; the woman with the issue of blood was " made whole from that hour." Jairus's daughter

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

does not need food to complete her recovery, nor is any doubt left as to the thorough cure of the Syro-Phœnician woman's daughter, or of the dumb, maimed lame, and blind in xv. 31. So, too, the epileptic boy's cure is sudden and complete.' ¹ The same tendency to intensify the miraculous elements is discovered in Matthew's accounts of the other miracles derived from Mark. ²

With regard to the incidents borrowed by Matthew from Q, Mr. Thompson says: 'The same process of editing could probably be demonstrated in the case of Q, if it were possible at all adequately to compare St. Matthew's version with the original as can be done in the case of Mark.' ³

We have in Matthew's Gospel several miracles not recorded elsewhere. As to these Mr. Thompson says: 'It is only reasonable, then, to suppose that a similar process of editing has been applied to the miraculous stories which are peculiar to the Gospel.' ⁴ He gives as an instance of the process the story of the healing of the two blind men (ix. 27-31). ⁵

The same thing is illustrated in connexion with Luke. He is said to have heightened the reports which he took over from Mark. 'The miraculousness of the incidents is sometimes heightened. When Mark reports that Jesus "healed many," St. Luke says that

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 69.

² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

“He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them.” The “great fever” and the man “full of leprosy” have the same force.’¹ And speaking of Luke’s account of Jairus’s daughter, Mr. Thompson says: ‘The completeness of the miracle is emphasized by “she shall be made whole,” “knowing that she was dead,” and “her spirit returned.” In these few alterations the tendency to put the miraculousness of the incident beyond doubt is clearly present.’²

Luke is supposed to have shown the same tendency in his editing of Q. ‘The notice that the centurion’s servant was “at the point of death” is not a medical detail, but a heightening of the distress . . . a characteristic of the Gospel.’³

We have no means, of course, of comparing Mark’s narratives with any earlier ones. Wendling’s documents are purely hypothetical. But Mr. Thompson thinks that the evidence as to Matthew and Luke ‘suggests that a similar process had been at work in the case of Mark.’⁴ And he says in his later work: ‘From this survey we bring back, for the solution of the crucial miracles in St. Mark, two suggestions. One is that the heightening of the miraculous element, which can be shown to have taken place in St. Matthew’s and St. Luke’s editing of St. Mark, may very well have taken place also in St. Mark’s editing of his Petrine and Apostolic sources.’⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

Through Facts to Faith, p. 27.

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It may readily be admitted that the differences between the narratives of the miracles of Jesus as given by John, Matthew, and Luke, on the one hand, and by Mark, on the other, are not exaggerated by Mr. Thompson. But the contention that these differences are due to heightening without evidence, is a pure hypothesis. As Dr. Walter Lock says: 'It needs to be remembered that with all that has been done for the study of the Gospels we do not really know even yet the exact purpose for which some of them were written, much less the exact historic circumstance which called them forth. . . . Till we know the purpose and the occasion, the exact weight to be attached to variations cannot be properly estimated.'¹

(4) *Wrong inference.* Mr. Thompson thinks that there are instances of wrong inference in several of our narratives. He considers that it is a possibility far from remote that the disciples attributed the calming of the sea mistakenly to something that Jesus said.² And with regard to the woman with a spirit of infirmity he says that 'probably St. Luke has wrongly inferred from Jesus' words in xiii. 16, that it was a case of possession.'³ In two cases the error is supposed to have consisted in regarding a mere coincident circumstance as a cause. Speaking of the cure of the centurion's servant at a distance, Mr. Thompson says:

¹ *Miracles*, Dr. Lock and others, 1911, p. 31.

² *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 43.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

'If the thing really happened so, it was probably a coincidence.'¹ His opinion is the same concerning the healing of a nobleman's son.²

We notice that in these cases again the utmost that is said is : it is possible, it is probable. No evidence is brought forward in support of the theory that the miraculous element in the narratives in question is due to wrong inference.

(5) *Faulty observation of events.* Faulty observation is supposed to have occurred in connexion with the miracle of walking on the sea. 'In order to rejoin His disciples, Jesus had to go round the lake during the night. Before they expect Him they see Him in the grey morning twilight, appearing in the midst of the waves breaking on the shore, without being aware how near they are to the strand. Prone to believe in the miraculous, excited by the darkness and the storm, and ever on the outlook for the extraordinary in their Master's conduct, they say to themselves, He has come to us over the waves, and cling to this romantic belief even after they have set foot on the shore, and found Him standing there.'³ Dr. Salmon modifies the above account by supposing that 'Jesus, seeing how near the boat containing His disciples had come, proceeded to join it by walking through the shallow waters.'⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55. ² *Ibid.*, p. 105.

³ See Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, 5th ed., p. 224.

⁴ *The Human Element in the Gospels*, 1907, p. 324.

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The above explanation is a pure conjecture. It does not claim to be based on anything in the evidence itself. And as Dr. Salmon admits, 'It has to encounter the serious difficulties, that it contradicts St. Mark's statement that *all the disciples saw Him walking on the sea*, and also that instead of His coming to join them, He seemed as if He was going to pass by them.'¹

(6) *Erroneous beliefs*. It is said that the disciples were labouring under a delusion in the form of erroneous beliefs inherited from their ancestors. Such is said to have been the case in connexion with what is known as demoniacal possession. The disciples evidently believed in the reality of demons. They believed that the demons entered into human beings, and were the cause of a number of ailments. Now, it has been maintained by some that belief in possession by demons was a pure hallucination, and that the various ailments were only effects of the delusion.² Others again hold that the primary thing in all cases of the kind was some mental or nervous disease, and that the belief in possession by a demon was merely a current theory in an unscientific age as to its cause.³ Dr. Bruce is inclined to favour the second of these views. 'One is tempted to infer,' he says, 'that the notion of possession was but the device of an unscientific age to account

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

² See Keim, *Jesu von Nazara*.

³ See Lardner, *Works* (London: Westley & Davis), vol. i. pp. 449-519; also Farmer, *Essay on the Demoniacs of the New Testament* (London, 1775).

for the *appearance* of an oppressed will or personality exhibited in mental disease, and in epileptic attacks in a marked degree, and in a less obtrusive manner in other ailments.' ¹ Drs. Worcester and McComb pronounce definitely in favour of this view. With regard to the boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, 'a modern physician would content himself with diagnosing the case as epilepsy, a disease of the highest nerve centres and appearing in different forms. The demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum appears to have been afflicted with some type of hysteria . . . the demoniac of Gerasa . . . is plainly the victim of some type of mania. In the cases of the blind and dumb demoniac and the dumb demoniac recorded by the first Evangelist,² the dumbness and blindness are probably the accompaniments of a hysterical neurosis. With the healing of the hysteria these symptoms would naturally disappear.' ³

That this explanation of the belief in demons may possibly be correct, we readily admit. Among certain races and tribes, ailments are still ascribed to the immanent action of demons. This is the case among the Khasi, dwelling on the Khasia Hills of Assam. The Lecturer possesses the evidence on this point of a native, U Raibhajur, who came over lately to this

¹ *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, p. 179.

² It is the former case that is recorded by Matthew only, the latter is recorded by Matthew and Luke.

³ *Religion and Medicine*, p. 360.

country to study medicine in the University of Liverpool.¹ Still, although we are perfectly ready to allow that belief in demons may be only a crude unscientific theory to account for ailments, we are not justified in pronouncing absolutely in favour of this view. If the primary thing in demoniacity is some nervous or mental disease, the complaint ought to be capable of being diagnosed. Yet Sir Risdon Bennett says, 'Nor does it appear to us possible, on any principles of medical science, to refer these (that is, many of the instances of possession by devils recorded in the New Testament) to any known form of bodily disease.'² But, even allowing that in the case of the demoniac the only objective reality was the ailment, the miraculous is not thereby of necessity eliminated; for, it may be maintained that its cure is miraculous. And, judging solely by the narratives, this is the natural conclusion in the majority of the cases.

(7) *Wrong diagnosis.* It is maintained that the disciples were under a delusion as to the nature of the complaints from which the patients cured by Jesus suffered. Their diagnosis of the cases was wrong through faulty observation of the symptoms. And it is claimed that Jesus wrought his cures simply by

¹ For an exhaustive examination of the whole subject, see F. C. Conybeare in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, July and October, 1896, and April and July, 1897.

² *The Diseases of the Bible*, p. 82. See also Belcher, *Our Lord's Miracles of Healing*, chapter v.; and Row, *The Supernatural in the New Testament*, chapters ix.,-xiii.

applying, consciously or unconsciously, the principles of Psychotherapeutics.

We have already referred to Psychotherapeutics.¹ It is necessary for us now to discuss the subject more fully.

It is universally admitted that there is a close connexion between Mind and Body. We are not at present concerned with the connexion as a problem in Metaphysics or in Psychophysics, but as a problem in Psychotherapeutics. Even in this limited sphere it is admitted by all that Mind and Body are very intimately related. An unhealthy mind tends to produce an unhealthy body. The belief that this is the case finds expression in our very language. We speak of a person dying of a 'broken heart.' Grief is a phenomenon of the mind; but deep and prolonged grief affects injuriously the body, and unless relief comes, death may ensue. In making these assertions we are simply stating what everybody will admit.

Medical writers speak quite explicitly on the question under consideration. There is an interesting essay by J. Warren Achorn, M.D., on 'Some physical disorders having mental origin.'² We might multiply quotations; but it is not necessary. That certain bodily ailments are due to mental causes is an undisputed induction of medical science.³

¹ Introduction, chapter ii.

² Appendix I to *Religion and Medicine* (Worcester, and others).

³ In confirmation of the above see Dr. Waller, *Human*

But, if the mind can injure, can it not also heal? Can we not reach the diseased body through the mind, and by producing a healthy mind help at least to create a healthy body? The science of 'Mental healing' answers these questions in the affirmative. In *Religion and Medicine* there is a chapter written by Isador H. Coriat, M.D., on 'The general principles of Psychotherapy.' Psychotherapy is to be applied in purely psychic disorders. It is the rational treatment also for certain functional disorders. But, before this method of treatment is applied to any case, it should be subjected to careful examination. 'We cannot reiterate too frequently,' says Dr. Coriat, 'that a thorough neurological, psychiatric, or general medical examination, is absolutely necessary before the institution of any form of psychic treatment, not only to rule out any organic disease or distinctly organic complication of a seemingly pure functional disorder, but also to obtain an intelligent comprehension of the case.'¹ In illustrating the necessity for this advice Dr. Coriat refers to two cases, in one of which the patient, a middle-aged man, was found on examination to be suffering from cancer of the stomach, for which psychic treatment would have been ineffectual. In the other case, 'the patient was a young man who for years had been treated for an organic disease of the

Physiology, 2nd edition; Sir T. Lauder Brunton, *Action of Medicine*.

¹ *Religion and Medicine*, p. 261.

stomach, by means of drugs and special diet. He did not improve, however, and finally a careful neurological examination revealed that the symptoms referable to the stomach were not only functional in nature, but that these symptoms were only a portion of a severe functional nervous disease. In fact the patient was a sufferer from hysteria. Careful psychic treatment directed towards hysteria brought about a disappearance of the gastric symptoms and finally a cure.'¹ The main instrument in mental healing is 'Suggestion.' With regard to psychotherapeutic methods Dr. Coriat says: 'Suggestion may be given in the waking, half-waking, or hypnotic state; psychic or motor re-education may be necessary in diseases of long duration, where habits of thought or of activity have become distinctly abnormal. Isolation is indicated in certain hysterical states, while persuasion or a rational, sincere explanation will often appeal to the more intelligent class of patients. Ignoring and purposeful neglect are sometimes of value in the hysteria of children. The principle of reserve energy has opened up new vistas in psychotherapy. To all of these, of course, treatment by physical agents is frequently necessary—rest, baths, electricity, diet, drugs. Nor must we forget one factor of the highest importance—the individuality of the physician.'²

The questions asked at the beginning of the preceding

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 263.

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paragraph are also answered in the affirmative by the advocates of 'Faith healing.' There need be no antagonism between mental healing and faith healing. The latter in its higher reaches simply brings into operation influences not at the command of pure Psychotherapy. In the volume to which we have repeatedly referred there is a chapter by Samuel McComb, D.D., one of the pastors of Emmanuel Church, Boston, U.S.A., on 'Faith and its therapeutic power.' 'If we regard faith,' says Dr. McComb, 'simply as a psychical process or mental attitude, history and experience alike testify that it has healing virtue. . . . It is not so much the quality as the strength of the faith that is of vital moment so far as the removal of a given disorder is concerned. . . . How is it that faith as a mere mental state has this power? Modern physiology gives the answer. It tells us that the processes of the body are controlled by the two great nerve systems, the cerebro-spinal and the sympathetic. We perform our conscious acts through the mechanism of the brain; but the involuntary physical processes, such as the circulation of the blood, the complicated process of turning the food we consume into bone and flesh, in a word, all the vital chemistries of the body, are carried on by means of the sympathetic nerve system. Now it is on this system that the emotions have most direct effect. Fear disorganizes and paralyses the delicate machinery of the nervous organism, and as a result its various functional activities are disturbed or inhibited.

On the other hand, faith stimulates and harmonizes them.' ¹ Dr. A. T. Schofield explains the action of faith by saying that it stimulates the *vis medicatrix naturae*.²

Dr. McComb and his colleague, Elwood Worcester, D.D., Ph.D., contribute a chapter in *Religion and Medicine* on 'Prayer and its therapeutic value.' They say: 'It is obvious that such a spiritual exercise must have a beneficial reflex effect upon the mind of him who prays.'³ And if the mind is affected beneficially,

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 293, 294.

² Article on 'Spiritual Healing' in *Contemporary Review* for March, 1909.

THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH has given attention to these subjects. Among the topics discussed are the following: Demon possession and allied themes; The effect of mind on body as evidenced by faith cures; Faith cure, mind cure and the miracles of Lourdes; Faith and mind healing, and kindred phenomena; Faith healing and Christian Science; Cure of warts by Suggestion (or 'Charming'); Suggestion without Hypnotism; Possible cases of healing by Self-suggestion; Suggestion and health. The above list is taken from the 'Proceedings' and the 'Journal' of the British Society (1882-1901), and from the 'Proceedings' of the American Society (1885-1889).

See also on the subject of the preceeding paragraphs Schofield, *Faith Healing, Force of Mind, Unconscious Mind, and Unconscious Therapeutics*; Milne Bramwell, *Hypnotism: its history, practice and theory*, with the full bibliography given on pp. 440-464; Dubois, *The Psychic Treatment of Nervous Disorders* (1905); Various writers, *Medicine and the Church* (1910); *Report on the subject of 'Spiritual Healing,'* submitted by the Council of British Medical Association, in *Supplement to the British Medical Journal*, July 15, 1911.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

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so will also, of course, the body. But this is not all : through praying for others, we may inspire hope in them, and lead them to pray for themselves. And it is suggested that our prayers for absent persons can reach them through telepathy, and so help them. This statement does not exhaust the efficacy of prayer according to the view of Drs. Worcester and McComb ; but it includes all to which we need refer in the present connexion.

Now, it is maintained that some at least of the cases of healing reported in the Gospels can be explained on the principles described above, and that, consequently, they cease to be miracles for us to-day. Matthew Arnold says : ‘ In one respect alone have the miracles recorded by them (the Bible-writers) a more real ground than the mass of miracles of which we have the relation. Medical science has never gauged—never, perhaps, enough set itself to gauge—the intimate connexion between moral fault and disease. To what extent, or in how many cases, what is called *illness* is due to moral springs having been used amiss—whether by being over-used or by not being used sufficiently—we hardly at all know, and we far too little inquire. Certainly it is due to this very much more than we commonly think ; and the more it is due to this, the more do moral therapeutics rise in possibility and importance. The bringer of light and happiness, the calmer and pacifier, or invigorator and stimulator, is one of the chiefest of doctors. Such a doctor was

Jesus; such an operator, by an efficacious and real, though little observed and little employed agency.' ¹ Archbishop Temple, also, in his *Bampton Lectures* says: 'Take again any of our Lord's miracles of healing. There is no question at all that the power of mind over body is exceedingly great, and has never yet been thoroughly examined. . . . It is quite conceivable that many of Christ's miracles of healing may have been the result of this power of mind over body which we are now considering. It is possible that they may be due . . . to a superiority in His mental power to the similar power possessed by other men. . . . Possibly He may have possessed this power absolutely where others possessed it conditionally. He may have possessed it without limit; others within limits.' ²

The contention, then, is that the principles of Psychotherapeutics—for we may expand the meaning of this term so as to include under it faith healing as described above—are adequate to explain some at least of the healing works of Jesus.

At the present stage of our inquiry, our point of view in our examination of the above contention must be simply that of Evidence. The question is, What evidence is there that the cures attributed to Jesus were cases of faith healing? In dealing with the evidence we are not now, of course, restricted to the face value of the records, as we were in a previous chapter.³ If

¹ *Literature and Dogma* (R.P.A.), p. 62.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 199-202. ³ Introduction, chapter ii.

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we can infer on historical grounds that their face value does not represent the historical reality, we shall be justified in making 'some deduction' from it. But still our standpoint, at present, must be that of Evidence.

Now, it is said that 'the patients as a whole belong to the class which has always cured itself by faith—faith in a person, or in a place, or in the efficacy of a ritual act.'¹ We may grant that the evidence is sufficient to justify this statement. We may admit also that Jesus did often demand faith as a condition of healing.² But it was as a *condition* of healing alone that he is represented as demanding faith. The healing itself is described as 'a free gift granted by the healer in recognition of the presence of faith . . . (and) it was not by any means always due to faith on the part of the diseased person, but might be due to faith on the part of one who was interested in the patient.'³ In the case of faith healing, however, the faith of the patient is the efficient cause of the cure. But it may be argued that we ought here to go beyond the face value of the records. We may, of course, be justified in doing this on grounds of analogy, or on grounds of probability after taking all the criteria bearing on the subject into consideration. But there is no direct evidence that, in the case of the miracles of healing

¹ *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 40.

² See Luke viii. 50; Mark v. 37; Matt. ix. 28; Luke xviii. 14, Mark x. 51, Matt. xx. 32; also Mark ix. 23.

³ R. J. Ryle, *op. cit.*, pp. 584, 585.

attributed to Jesus, 'the real force which worked the patient's cure dwelt in the patient's own mind.'¹ Again, we may readily grant that the crowds who came to Jesus, and who followed him from place to place, were in a very excited and expectant frame of mind. Consequently, if any of them were suffering from functional diseases of the nervous system, they would be prepared by their excitement and expectancy to obtain relief through Psychotherapeutics. Finally, it is said that 'the power to call out and exercise healing faith—a power dependent upon simplicity of religious belief, calmness, and strength of will—was undoubtedly present in Jesus to an exceptional degree.'² We may admit that the evidence justifies again this assertion.

But the considerations mentioned in the above paragraph do not constitute direct evidence that the miracles attributed to Jesus were actually due to Psychotherapeutics.

From our present point of view the determining factor will be the nature of the diseases cured. Were they such as could be cured by Psychotherapeutics? Is there anything in the evidence in our possession to justify a belief that they were? Mr. J. M. Thompson examines at length the works of healing recorded by Mark, and comes to the conclusion that they are instances of faith healing. Dr. R. J. Ryle also examines the same incidents, as a medical man, and comes to

¹ Ryle, *op. cit.*, p. 584.

² *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 40.

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a different conclusion. It will be well for us to place side by side the views of these two writers.

Mr. Thompson arranges the diseases healed in six groups : (a) *Defects of sight, hearing and speech*. Having described the cures, he says that 'in none of these cases do there seem to be sufficient grounds for asserting that the cures go beyond the ascertained or ascertainable results of faith healing. In none need we posit a miracle.' But he makes no attempt to support his view by showing that the diseases were such as were capable of psychotherapeutic treatment. Dr. Ryle, however, speaking of the instances of the healing of the blind, says : 'Now, there is an affection which is mentioned in books upon diseases of the eye which goes by the name of "hysterical amblyopia," and which is generally found in young people, and these almost always of the female sex. It need hardly be observed that in Syria, as also elsewhere, other causes of blindness are vastly more common, and in both the instances which are recorded in St. Mark's gospel the patients are of the male sex and not young.'¹ (b) *Paralysis*. Mr. Thompson says that 'hysterical paralysis, or "functional paraplegia," is particularly amenable to faith-healing. The case that Jesus healed was probably of this kind, though an exceptional one. . . .

¹ Sir Risdon Bennett surmises that, in the case of the blind man of Bethsaida, 'sight had been lost by some of those forms of inflammation or other ophthalmic disease which were common.' *The Diseases of the Bible*, p. 80. Cf. Belcher, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

The case of the *withered hand* was probably of a similar kind.' But he does not mention a single point in support of this supposed probability. Dr. Ryle admits that 'in the story of the paralytic who was borne of four . . . we have very little detail given us.' 'We can only say,' he adds, 'that the sex of the sufferer and the greater frequency of paralysis from organic disease both favour the guess that the patient was suffering from true paralysis, and not from its neurotic counterfeit.' With regard to the story of the man with the withered hand he says that 'it is probable that we have to do with another case of paralysis; and if so, we may assume with considerable confidence that the case was one of "infantile paralysis."¹ This is the affection to which at the present day nearly all the instances of "withered hand" or of "withered leg" are owing.' Having described the ordinary history of 'a withered hand,' Dr. Ryle says: 'If such was the pathology of the case described in Mark iii. 1, it is needless to say that although it belongs to the group of the nervous diseases, it does not belong to that class of nervous disease which admits of treatment by moral impression or emotional shock.' (c) *Fever*. Mr. Thompson assumes that the cure of Simon's wife's

¹ Cf. Dr. Macalister. 'The man with the withered hand was probably a sufferer in his early years from *anterior poliomyelitis*, causing infantile paralysis. In such a case the bones as well as the muscles atrophy, and the limb becomes reduced to a mere stick.' Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. iii. p. 326b. Cf. also Belcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 124 ff.

mother was an instance of faith healing, but he makes no attempt to diagnose the fever from which the patient suffered. Dr. Ryle says that 'neither the age of the patient nor the ailment suggests that her illness was only "on the nerves." Febrile diseases are common in all countries, since infection and septic absorption are common in all countries, and these are not conditions which have shown themselves to be suitable to the treatment by what are called psychical methods.'¹

(d) *Leprosy*. Mr. Thompson states that 'faith cures are common enough in the case of skin diseases.' But he does not mention a single fact in support of the view that the leprosy of the Gospels was a skin disease curable by Psychotherapeutics. Dr. Ryle says: 'The Greek word λέπρα seems to have referred to the scaly surface often noticed; and it is at any rate probable that many cases of persistent eczema, and some of psoriasis, lupus, and syphilis, were included under this name. Now there is not one of these diseases which admits of instantaneous cure by means of a strong mental impression.' (e) *Issue of blood*. With regard to the cure of the woman suffering from this complaint, Mr. Thompson says that it was a 'thorough case of faith-healing.' Dr. Ryle says: 'It is uncertain whether we ought to understand by this expression that she

¹ Cf. Sir Risdon Bennett. 'There can be little doubt that the disease, in this case, was some form of continued and probably malignant fever,' *The Diseases of the Bible*, p. 74. Cf. also Belcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-48.

was a sufferer from hæmorrhoids, or whether we ought to assume that she was the subject of one of the diseases peculiar to women. In neither case, however, can we suppose that the ailment was one of the kind peculiarly amenable to psychical treatment.' ¹ (f) *Possession*. We have already admitted that it is possible that the belief in possession by a demon was merely a current theory in an unscientific age to account for certain mental or nervous diseases. When dealing with the cases of possession Mr. Thompson gives no diagnosis of the diseases. This is done, however, as we have already seen, by Drs. Worcester and McComb. They speak of epilepsy, hysteria, mania, and hysterical neurosis giving rise to blindness and dumbness. And they consider these complaints amenable to psychotherapeutic cure. Dr. Ryle, however, says: 'The persons who may be fairly supposed to have constituted the bulk of the 'possessed' are not, as a matter of fact, the sort of persons to be straightway healed by a word. Doubtless personal and emotional influences are important factors in the treatment of these unfortunate beings, especially when these influences are brought to bear in a systematic manner and over a prolonged period in institutions wholly given up to the work; but these are not the subjects among whom to look

¹ Cf. Belcher. From the fact that the woman suffered for twelve years, it has been suggested, he says, that her affliction was not menorrhagia, but rather metrorrhagia, from organic disease of the uterus and its appendages. *Op. cit.*, pp. 211, 212.

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for examples of faith healing ; and it may be added, they are the subjects who lend themselves least of all to the modern remedial measures of hypnotism and suggestion.' ¹

Mr. Thompson's attitude is the same towards the Gospel cures not found in Mark. They are cases of faith healing. But he does not furnish any evidence that the diseases in question are amenable to such treatment. ²

We have already argued that it is fair to suppose that the Evangelists did not regard the general narratives of cures in a different light from those in which the details are given. ³ And since we have now seen that there is no direct and incontrovertible evidence to indicate that the diseases in the cases described at length were amenable to psychotherapeutic treatment, we may infer that, if the other cures had been fully described, the same thing would have been true with regard to them.

The conclusion we reach then is, that there is no

¹ See Thompson, *Miracles in the New Testament*, pp. 33-41 ; Dr. Worcester, etc., *Religion and Medicine*, pp. 357-363 ; Ryle, article in *Hibbert Journal* (April, 1907) on *The Neurotic Theory of the Miracles of Healing*, pp. 576-583 of the *Journal*. See also W. H. Johnson, article in *The Princeton Theological Review* (October, 1910) on *Miracles and History*.

² For the nature of the complaints in these cases see Sir Risdon Bennett, *The Diseases of the Bible* ; Dr. Belcher, *Our Lord's Miracles of Healing* ; and Dr. Macalister, article on *Medicine in Hastings*, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. iii.

³ Introduction, chapter ii.

direct evidence that the cures attributed to Jesus were as a class wrought psychotherapeutically, and there is no direct and unquestionable evidence that the diseases which he is said to have cured were of such a kind as to be amenable to psychotherapeutic treatment.

(B.) We have considered at length the belief entertained by several that 'some deduction' may be made from the face value of the narratives under our examination. We come now to consider a belief which goes considerably further than the one just discussed. It is maintained by some that in certain cases, at any rate, the whole of the miraculous narrative is unhistorical.

(1) This was the view entertained by Strauss in his *Leben Jesu*, the first edition of which appeared in 1835. He explained the origin of the miraculous narratives as follows. The Jews expected the Messiah. The Messiah was to be a prophet. In the old national legends the prophets were made illustrious by the most wonderful actions and destiny. The whole Messianic era was expected to be full of signs and wonders. The eyes of the blind should be opened, the ears of the deaf should be unclosed, the lame should leap, and the tongue of the dumb praise God. These merely figurative expressions soon came to be understood literally, and thus the idea of the Messiah was continually filled up with new details, even before the appearance of Jesus. The Messianic hope had merely to be trans-

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ferred to Jesus, and accommodated to his character and doctrine. In short, the argument was: Such and such things must happen to the Messiah; Jesus was the Messiah; therefore such and such happened to him.¹

The theory of Strauss is still maintained in its essential principle by a few. Thus a writer in *The British Congregationalist* says: 'Jesus (= Deliverer, cp. Joshua) Messiah "did" miracles because the Old Testament picture showed that He would: cp. Isa. xxxv., "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened; the ears of the deaf unstopped; the lame man shall leap as an hart; and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." The story of the stilling of the storm seems to be composed from Jon. i. 4-6, 15, with Ps. cvii., "He maketh the storm a calm." The feeding of the 5,000 is composed from the Elisha story of the feeding of many (with some food left over too) in 2 Kings iv. 42-44. The Messiah would be as great also as Elijah, so He "must have" raised a widow's son from death. Hence the story of the widow of Nain.'²

Still we do not know of any acknowledged authority on Gospel criticism who claims to-day that the whole of any of the miraculous narratives can be explained by the principle of assimilation. It is alleged, as we

¹ *The Life of Jesus*, translated into English from the 4th German edition, 1846, vol. i. pp. 80-83.

² *The British Congregationalist*, October 24, 1912, p. 780.

have seen, that this principle accounts for details. But it does not account for entire narratives. Mr. Thompson himself admits that the mythological line of explanation in connexion with the feeding of the five thousand is 'too superficial.'¹ And, speaking broadly, he says: 'This theory, though it may explain the modification of narratives, cannot generally account for their origination.'²

(2) It is supposed that some of the narratives of miracles are due to the materialization of parables spoken by Jesus. With regard to the turning of water into wine, Mr. Thompson says that the incident 'has no parallel in the Synoptic Gospels, unless it is based on the sayings in Mark ii. 19-22, xiv. 25 (*cf.* John iii. 29, Rev. xix. 7).'³ As to the story of the raising of Lazarus, he says: 'Its origin was possibly the suggestion made at the end of the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 27-31).'⁴ Of the withering of the fig-tree he says: 'The clue seems rather to be given by Luke's parable of the fig-tree, which was doubtless interpreted as symbolical of the visit of Jesus to Jerusalem. . . . But subsequently the parable was either combined with an incident which we cannot reconstruct, or was simply materialized into the form in which it appears in Mark; and the his-

¹ *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 45.

² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

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torical rejection of Judaism was represented by the withering away of the tree.'¹

Our criticism upon the above explanations is that they are presented without any evidence being offered in support of them.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

CHAPTER V

THE EVIDENCE : FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

OUR conclusion so far is that no adequate reason is given for eliminating any important features from any of the narratives in question, or for discrediting the historical value of any of the narratives as a whole. This being the case, we may proceed to present further considerations bearing on the credibility of the narratives.

(A.) One thing which strikes us very forcibly is the large number of records of a general character which we find in the Gospels. Jesus went to a certain place ; there were brought unto him all that were sick of divers diseases ; and he healed them. There are as many as fourteen general narratives of this kind. They are : (2), (7), (8), (9), (14), (15), (17), (23), (24), (25), (28), (31), (41), and (45) of our list. Several of them are found in the very earliest documents. Five, namely, (7), (8), (15), (23), and (28), are found in Mark's Gospel. Of these, (7), as to its main elements, is recognized by Wendling as in the primitive Gospel, the earliest of the hypothetical sources of the

Second Gospel.¹ Weiss, also, includes (25) in his reconstruction of Q.²

It seems to us really difficult to account for the origin of these general narratives on any theory of invention. It is true that Mr. Thompson speaks of Luke's 'editorial note,' and of Matthew's 'editorial commonplace.'³ With regard to four of the summaries of miracle found in Matthew, he says: 'These, it is clear, are not genuine summaries based on fresh evidence, but bits of literary joinery, designed to round off the narrative.'⁴ But Mr. Thompson mentions no consideration in support of his view. The presence, then, of some at least of these general narratives of miracles in the Gospels supports the credibility of the evidence on behalf of the special miracles.

(B.) We are struck also by the consistency of the motives assigned in connexion with the miracles of Jesus with his character as described in the Gospels.

The term 'motive' is used in two senses. 'A motive may be understood to mean either that which *impels* or that which *induces* us to act in a particular

¹ *Ur-Marcus*, p. 43. Ὁψίας δὲ γενομένης, ὅτε ἔδυν ὁ ἥλιος, ἔφερον πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας* καὶ ἦν ὅλη ἡ πόλις ἐπισυνηγμένη πρὸς τὴν θύραν. καὶ ἐθεράπευσεν πολλοὺς*. The rest of the narrative Wendling attributes to the Evangelist. See *op. cit.*, p. 60.

² *Die Quellen der Synoptischen Überlieferung*, p. 32. Οἱ δὲ ὄχλοι ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἀποδεξάμενος αὐτοὺς ἐθεράπευσεν τοὺς χρεῖαν ἔχοντας θεραπείας. Cf. Luke ix. 11.

³ *Miracles in the New Testament*, pp. 57, 68.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

way.' ¹ Emotions are motives of the former kind; while thoughts of ends to be attained are motives of the latter descriptions. ²

We shall deal simply with the cases where motive is affirmed, directly or indirectly, either by Jesus himself or by the narrators.

With regard to the motive which impelled Jesus to perform the miracles the only thing mentioned in the narratives is 'compassion.' In two cases reference is made to the motive by Jesus himself. In one case he said to his disciples, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days and have nothing to eat: and I would not send them away fasting, lest haply they faint in the way.' ³ The other case is that of the demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes. As Jesus 'was entering into the boat, he that had been possessed with devils besought him that he might be with him. And he suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee.' ⁴ In four instances the reference to compassion is due to the narrators. In two cases Jesus is said to 'have been moved with compassion.' ⁵ In the other two cases he is said to 'have taken compassion on' a person or

¹ Mackenzie, *A Manual of Ethics*, 4th ed., p. 62.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 64.

³ Matt. xv. 32. Cf. Mark viii. 2.

⁴ Mark v. 18, 19. ⁵ Mark i. 41 and Matt. xx. 34.

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persons.¹ In all the instances to which reference has already been made motive is directly assigned either by Jesus himself or by the writers. There is one passage where motive is ascribed indirectly. It is said that when Jesus saw the impotent man lying at the pool of Bethesda, 'and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wouldest thou be made whole?'² We may safely say that here also the motive was compassion.

All we need add just now in connexion with the matter is, that compassion is perfectly consistent with the character of Jesus as delineated in the Gospels. Whatever else he was, he was a man full of compassion for the poor and the afflicted in body and in mind.

As to the motives which induced Jesus to perform the miracles several things are mentioned in the Gospels. Latham has devoted a whole chapter to this subject under the title, 'Our Lord's use of Signs.' His treatment is very exhaustive and highly interesting; but it is too inferential for our present purpose. What he tries to determine, in the first instance, is 'the various functions which our Lord's miracles fulfilled.'³ From the result of this investigation he infers the functions which they were intended to fulfil,

¹ Luke vii. 13 and Matt. xiv. 14.

² John v. 6.

³ *Pastor Pastorum*, p. 77. Cf. Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, Chapter VIII., *The Gospel Miracles in relation to the Christian Revelation*.

and enumerates the following as motives of Jesus in his miracles: (1) the attraction of hearers; (2) selection; (3) preparation; (4) setting forth the Kingdom of God; (5) teaching; (6) practical instruction; (7) proof.¹ We prefer adopting a more direct method of treatment.

A careful study of all the narratives exhibits some three motives. (1) *To reveal himself*. This is asserted by Jesus to have been the motive in the case of the palsied brought to him on a bed. 'But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he said unto him that was palsied), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thy house.'² The miracle is said to have been wrought to demonstrate the fact that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins. Again, Jesus said, in connexion with Lazarus, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.'³ There is another case which ought perhaps to be inserted here. At the marriage in Cana of Galilee Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.'⁴ It is not easy to determine the exact meaning of the last sentence in the verse. But in the light of the words of the evangelist towards the end of the paragraph—'this beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory'⁵—we

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 77-111. ² Luke v. 24. *Cf.* Mark ii. 10, 11.

³ John xi. 4.

⁴ John ii. 4.

⁵ ii. 11.

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might say that what Jesus meant by his hour was the hour to manifest his glory. (2) *To create belief.* This is expressly stated by Jesus to have been his motive in the raising of Lazarus. 'Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.'¹ There are other cases where the words of Jesus imply that this was his motive.² Yet in one instance he implies that the highest form of belief is not that created by seeing 'signs and wonders.'³ (3) *To manifest the works of God: for the glory of God.* Jesus said with regard to the man blind from his birth, 'Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.'⁴ The sickness of Lazarus, also, was 'for the glory of God.'⁵

Now these motives again are perfectly consistent with the general character of Jesus as described in the Gospels.

It may be argued, of course, that the preceding discussion as to motive proves nothing as to historicity. We expect to find the motives of an act attributed to a person in fiction perfectly consistent with the character of that person as otherwise known. If they are not, the author comes under the censure of the critic. But the Gospels purport to be history; and they are history, in part at any rate. And this makes all the

¹ John xi. 14, 15.

² See Luke vii. 21, 22.

³ John iv. 48.

⁴ John ix. 3.

⁵ John xi. 4.

difference. In a work which claims to be historical, consistency of the motives of certain alleged acts with the character of the person said to have performed them may fairly be brought forward in support of the credibility of the narrative.¹

(C.) Finally, we cannot but observe the intimate connexion of the narratives of the miracles of Jesus with the rest of his history as depicted in the Gospels. 'The miraculous element in the Gospels is no mere excrescence or external adjunct easily separable from the body of the history, but an essential portion of it, closely woven into the fabric, vitally connected with the organism. Words and works are so united that the one divorced from the other would in many instances become unintelligible.'² Mr. T. H. Wright in an article on *Miracles* speaks to the same effect. 'If excision be made from the Evangelic records (1) of all that directly narrates His unique action as a healer and wonder-worker, (2) of all that presupposes the possibility and actuality of such unique action, (3) of all that testifies to His authority and power due to a unique relation to God—the Gospels are left bald and bare and mutilated beyond description. The

¹ Of course, if it could be proved that the references to motives and effects were mere editorial additions without any foundation in fact, the force of our argument would be destroyed. But the view which regards them as such is a pure hypothesis.

² Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, p. 115. Cf. Bernard in Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*. vol. iii. p. 389b.

very warp and woof of the fabric is destroyed.' ¹ Mr. Wright has applied the process to the first three chapters of Mark's Gospel. The result, he says, is that 'the whole narrative is rendered colourless and dislocated.' ² Now, no one denies that there is a historical element in the Gospel narrative. But the ordinary history is so intimately, and so naturally, connected with the miraculous narratives that the truth of the former is an argument in favour of the credibility of the latter.

¹ Hastings, *Dict. of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. ii. p. 188a.

² *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VI

CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE

WE shall now refer to several considerations, which may be looked upon as corroborative evidence in support of the credibility of the miracles of Jesus.

(1) We have in the Gospels a large number of indirect references to miraculous action on the part of Jesus. Hitherto we have not referred to any of these. We discover in the four Gospels as many as forty-two such references. The majority of them are to be found in one Gospel only; some are found in two of the Gospels; and some in three. Nineteen indirect references are found in John's Gospel. It is not easy to classify the references. We shall attempt a classification based on the source to which the reference is due in each case. (a) *Jesus*. We have fourteen indirect references by Jesus himself, namely, in John iv. 48; v. 20, 21, 26; Luke iv. 23, 25, 26, 27; Matthew xi. 5 (compare Luke vii. 22); John vi. 26; Matthew xvi. 9, 10, Mark viii. 19, 20; John vii. 21; Luke x. 13, Matthew xi. 20-24; Luke x. 23, 24; John x. 25, 32,

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37, 38 ; Luke xiii. 32 ; Luke xx. 8, Mark xi. 29, 33 ; John xiv. 10, 11, 12 ; xv. 24. (b) *Nicodemus*. Having come to Jesus by night, Nicodemus said, ' Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.' ¹ (c) *Two disciples on the way to Emmaus*. ' And one of them, named Cleopas, answering said unto him (Jesus), Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days ? And he said unto them, What things ? And they said unto him, the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.' ² (d) *The people*. We have six indirect references to the miracles of Jesus attributed to ' the people.' See Matthew xiii. 54, Mark vi. 2 ; John vii. 31 ; x. 21 ; 41 ; xi. 37 ; Luke xix. 37. (e) *Priests, etc.* There are four references belonging to this class. They are found in Mark iii. 22 ; John xi. 47 ; Luke xx. 2, Matthew xxi. 23, Mark xi. 28 ; ³ Mark xv. 31, 32, Luke xxiii. 35, Matthew xxvii. 42. (f) *Herod*. ' At that season Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist ; he is risen from the dead ; and therefore do these powers work in him.' ⁴ (g) *The Evangelists*. In all

¹ John iii. 2.

² Luke xxiv. 18, 19.

³ This is the same incident as that referred to in connexion with Luke xx. 8 and Mark xi. 29, 33 under (a) above.

⁴ Matthew xiv. 1, 2, Luke ix. 7-9, Mark vi. 14.

the preceding cases the Evangelists report remarks made by others containing references to miraculous action; in nearly all the cases now to be noticed they explain the conduct of others by a reference to the miracles of Jesus. There are fifteen references of this nature. See John iv. 45; Luke v. 15; Mark iii. 8; 10, 11, 12; Luke vii. 3; 18; viii. 2; Mark v. 27; John vi. 2; Mark vi. 52; John xii. 1, 9; 17, 18;¹ 37; Luke xxiii. 8; John xx. 30, 31. It may be noticed that eleven of these indirect references are found in Mark, the earliest of our present Gospels. It may be interesting to see how Wendling distributes them among his three hypothetical authorities. Mark xi. 28 and xv. 31, 32 he attributes to M¹; v. 27 and vi. 14 to M²; and the rest to the Evangelist.² Further, Harnack includes three of the indirect references in his reconstruction of Q. We quote these at length. 'But when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples and said unto him: Art thou he that cometh, or do we look for another? And he answered and said unto them: Go tell John what ye hear and see, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up.'³ 'Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works

¹ The same incident as that referred to in connexion with Luke xix. 37 under (d) above.

² *Ur-Marcus*.

³ *The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 263, 264. See Matt. xi. 2-5, and cf. Luke vii. 18, 22.

which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. . . . And thou Capernaum shalt thou have been exalted to heaven? To hell thou shalt be cast down!' ¹ Weiss, also, includes these three references in his reconstruction of Q. ² The very earliest documents, then, which we are called upon to consider, contained indirect references to the miraculous action of Jesus. Now, it seems to us that these references support the credibility of the narratives which have been under our special consideration in this Lecture. Consider, for example, Matthew xi. 2-5. Harnack includes the passage in Q, and he says that 'there is a strong balance of probability that Q is a work of St. Matthew.'³ If there is a strong balance of probability that Q is a work of Matthew, there is the same probability that the incident recorded in Matthew xi. 2-5 is historical. That is to say, there is a strong balance of probability that John the Baptist sent a deputation to Jesus, and that Jesus gave the reply recorded in this passage. But if Jesus really said, 'Go your way and tell John the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up,' his words lend credibility to the narratives of his miracles.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 265. See Matt. xi. 20-24, Luke x. 13.

² See *Die Quellen u.s.w.*, pp. 17, 28. Compare Allen in *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, pp. 250-252.

³ *The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 249.

It is almost certain that Matthew, supposing him to have been the authority for this incident, understood the words of Jesus literally. For he introduces the incident with the words 'when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples and said unto him : Art thou he that cometh, or do we look for another ? ' And further, the healing of the centurion's son is already recorded by him. But, could not Jesus have intended the words to be understood allegorically ? In reply to this question we say that it is almost inconceivable that Matthew should, in this case, understand in a literal sense what was intended to be understood allegorically. And with regard to the other indirect references, it seems to us more likely that the incidents are historical than that they are fictitious. If we suppose that they are not historical, it becomes extremely difficult to account for the origin of the records. But if the incidents are historical, the fact has to be borne in mind that Jesus himself, his disciples, the people in general, as well as his enemies, believed that he had performed miracles. Is it likely that they were all mistaken ?

(2) Jesus is reported in the Gospels to have been requested to work miracles. We meet with five such requests. We shall give them in their chronological order. The Jews in Jerusalem said to Jesus, 'What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things ? ' ¹ The crowd on the shore of the Sea of

¹ John ii. 18.

Galilee said, 'What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee? what workest thou? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness.' ¹ 'The Pharisees and Sadducees came and tempting him asked him to shew them a sign from heaven.' ² 'His brethren . . . said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may behold thy works which thou doest.' ³ 'Certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.' ⁴ Harnack includes the last of these requests in Q. ⁵ There is no reason for supposing that the requests are not historical. One of them, as we have seen, is admitted by Harnack to have been contained in Q. But, if the requests were really made, we have in that fact a proof that the persons who made them were not convinced that the belief in the miraculous action of Jesus was due to delusion.

We ought, in this connexion, to mention the temptation of Jesus. Dr. Sanday says, 'If there is anything certain in history, it is that the story of the Temptation has a real foundation in fact, for the simple reason that without such a foundation it would have occurred to no one to invent it.' ⁶ But if we admit that the

¹ John vi. 30, 31. ² Matt. xvi. 1-4, Mark viii. 11, 12.

³ John vii. 3. ⁴ Matt. xii. 38, Luke xi. 16.

⁵ *The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 137. Compare Allen, *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, p. 253.

⁶ Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. ii. p. 626b. Harnack includes the story of the temptation in Q. See *The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 127, 128.

story of the temptation is historical, we must admit also that Jesus believed himself to possess miraculous powers. And if Jesus thought that he possessed miraculous powers, is there not a very strong balance of probability that he did possess such powers? There is nothing in the Gospel narrative to suggest that he was either an impostor or mad. If, however, Jesus really possessed miraculous powers, the credibility of the narratives of his miraculous action is much enhanced.

(3) Mr. Charles H. Robinson remarks that an 'argument for the truth of the Gospel story is afforded by the limitations of Christ's powers of healing which are hinted at by the evangelists, *e.g.*, St. Mark vi. 5, limitations which later writers would not have dared to suggest.'¹ The ascription of limitation to the power of Jesus to work miracles does certainly refute the hypothesis that the miraculous narratives are pure inventions.

(4) A point closely related to the preceding is the self-restraint in the use of miraculous powers which is attributed to Jesus. Latham wrote a chapter on 'The Laws of the Working of Signs.' These Laws, he says, are five in number. '(a) Our Lord will not provide by miracle what could be provided by human endeavour or human foresight. . . . (b) Our Lord will not use His special powers to provide for His personal wants or for those of His immediate followers. (c) No miracle is to be worked merely for miracle's sake,

¹ *Studies in the Character of Christ*, 1908, p. 12 footnote.

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apart from an end of benevolence or instruction. (d) No miracle is to be worked to supplement human policy or force. . . . (e) No miracle is to be worked which should be overwhelming in point of awfulness so as to terrify men into acceptance, or which should be unanswerably certain, leaving no loophole for unbelief.' ¹ Dr. Sanday, also, refers to this consideration. 'We can see in the evangelists,' he says, 'a certain dim half-conscious feeling of the self-imposed limitations in the use of the supernatural by Christ.' ² If the miraculous narratives were due to invention of any kind, it is difficult to conceive that any self-restraint in the working of miracles would be attributed to Jesus. And again, it is difficult, on any theory which attempts to explain the origin of the miraculous narratives by delusion, to understand how the impression of self-restraint should be produced. This is an aspect of the evidence which seems to bear the water-mark of genuineness and to bring into view the solid ground of history. As Dr. Sanday says, 'We may be very sure that the evangelists have this feeling (of the self-imposed limitations in the use of the supernatural by Christ), because the limitations were inherent in the facts, not because they formed part from the first of a picture which they were constructing *a priori*.' ³

¹ *Pastor Pastorum*, pp. 112, 113. Cf. Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, pp. 260-268.

² Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. ii. pp. 626b, 627a. See also Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 10 ff.

³ Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. ii. p. 627a.

(5) We proceed to speak of the cases where Jesus insists on silence with respect to the miraculous act. There are seven direct references bearing on this point, namely, Luke iv. 41, Mark i. 34; Luke v. 14, Mark i. 43, 44, Matthew viii. 4; Matthew xii. 16; Luke viii. 56; Mark v. 43; Mark vii. 36; viii. 26; Matthew ix. 30. There is one indirect reference, also, belonging to this class, namely, Mark iii. 12. Now, it does not appear natural to account for this feature on any theory of invention or delusion. But if the insistence on silence is historical, the fact lends credibility to the rest of the narrative as it stands.

(6) Dr. Sanday refers to another point in support of the credibility of the miraculous narratives of the Gospels. 'The truth is,' he says, 'that the historian who tries to construct a reasoned picture of the Life of Christ finds that he cannot dispense with miracles. He is confronted with the fact that no sooner had the Life of Jesus ended in apparent failure and shame than the great body of Christians—not an individual here and there, but the mass of the Church—passed over at once to the fixed belief that He was God. By what conceivable process could the men of that day have arrived at such a conclusion, if there had been really nothing in His life to distinguish it from that of ordinary men? . . . Eliminate miracles from the career of Jesus, and the belief of Christians, from the first moment that we have undoubted contemporaneous evidence of it (say A.D. 50), becomes an insoluble enigma.'¹

¹ Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. ii. p. 627a.

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There is thus strong and cumulative constructive evidence in support of the miracles, as a class, which have been under our consideration. But before we actually draw our conclusion from the evidence, it will be well for us to examine other stories of miracles.

CHAPTER VII

OTHER MIRACLES

IT is an undoubted fact that we meet with many cycles of alleged miracles outside the four Gospels. We find them, for example, in the Old Testament, in Hindu literature, in the literature of Greece and Rome, in the remaining portions of the New Testament, in the Apocryphal Gospels, and in the Lives of the Saints.

An adequate study of each of these cycles of miracles would require a separate treatise. A complete investigation of some of the cycles would require indeed several treatises. Dr. Edwin A. Abbott has written two large volumes on the Death and Miracles of St. Thomas of Canterbury alone. Further, a comparative study of miracles would demand its own treatise. In such a work the points of resemblance between the various cycles would have to be carefully noted, and also the points of difference.

Fortunately for us, however, such an exhaustive inquiry into other miracles as is indicated above is not demanded by our present problem. Our subject is the miracles of Jesus. And our only question concerning

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them is one relating to fact. Did Jesus perform miracles? In view of this we may limit our further study in two directions. In the first place, we may confine our investigation of other miracles to such as are attributed to undoubtedly historical persons. And secondly, we need not consider these miracles except in so far as they may affect the credibility of the miracles of Jesus.

We shall endeavour to examine, very briefly, the main cycles just alluded to. In the first place we shall present the data in the case of each cycle. After this has been done, we shall draw our conclusion respecting the historicity of the alleged events.

The Old Testament miracles are mainly grouped round two epochs, namely, the great deliverance out of Egypt, and the beginning of Prophecy in Elijah and Elisha. In connexion with the former, we are greatly assisted by the fact that we have, as a rule, three different narratives of the same incidents, namely, the Early Judean Prophetic Narratives, the Early Ephraimite Prophetic Narratives, and the Late Priestly Narratives. Professor Driver fixes the 'probable real date of the Exodus' at about 1230 B.C.¹ We may assign the first of the narratives mentioned above to about 850-800 B.C.; the second to about 800-750 B.C.; and the third to about 450-400 B.C.² It is clear, then, that the narratives are late in com-

¹ *The Book of Exodus*, Camb. Univ. Press, 1911, p. viii.

² See Kent, *Narratives of the Beginnings of Hebrew History*, 1904, pp. 36, 40, 47.

parison with the events described in them. Further, the earlier narratives, in several cases, contain nothing miraculous for us to-day. The miraculous element is introduced in the Late Priestly Narrative. For example, the Early Judean Narrative describes the drying up of the Red Sea as follows: 'And Jehovah caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the bed of the sea dry.' The same incident is described in the Late Priestly Narrative thus: 'Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the waters were divided.'¹ Coming again to the second group of Old Testament miracles, we find several events of a miraculous character attributed to Elijah and Elisha. A story is told of Elisha, for example, according to which he made an iron axe-head to swim.² We may place the work of Elisha approximately between 850 and 795 B.C.³ The story of the floating iron is supposed to be derived from the Gilgal Cycle of Elisha Stories.⁴ 'It is impossible to fix their date exactly. Several generations have evidently transmitted them orally. They have the Northern Israelitish stamp, but since the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. did not mean the deportation of the bulk of the inhabitants of Israel, it is possible that they were not put in literary form until after that event. This later date also best accords with their general char-

¹ See Kent, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

² 2 Kings vi. 1-7.

³ See Kent, *Israel's Historical and Biographical Narratives*, 1905, the Chronological Chart.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

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acter.’¹ In this case also, then, it is clear that the date of the narrative is considerably later than that of the event narrated.

A large number of miracles has been attributed to Buddha. He lived from about 560 to 477 B.C.² Professor Rhys Davids gives a ‘Chronological Table of Buddhist literature from the Buddha’s time to the time of Asoka.’ This literature is divided by him into ten groups.³ We have no reason to suppose that any portion of it was composed during Buddha’s life-time.⁴ We may assume that Asoka reigned from 263 to 226 B.C.⁵ Consequently, the composition of the literature in question extended over a period of about two hundred years. In a letter to the present Lecturer Professor Rhys Davids says: ‘In Group 1–3 there are no miracles worked by the Buddha. In Group 4–16 vols.—there are one or two cases of what we should call miracles, but the Buddhists regarded them as perfectly natural occurrences. You will find instances (in English) at my *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II. 145 (the Transfiguration); II. 140 (clearing of turbid water); II. 94 (walking on the water). In Group 6 you can find one or two more in *Vinaya Texts*, S.B.E., Vol. I. [of *Vinaya*

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

² See Lehmann in Chantepie de la Saussaye’s *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte* (1905), vol. ii. pp. 84, 85. Cf. Geden in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ii. pp. 881, 883.

³ *Buddhist India* (1903), p. 188.

⁴ See Rhys Davids, *Buddhism* (S.P.C.K., 1910), p. 10.

⁵ See Lehmann, *op. cit.*, p. 79. Rhys Davids assigns Asoka’s death to 270 B.C. See *Buddhist India*, p. 272.

Texts] p. 124 ff. (the wonders at Uruvela). These are about all; but I have not searched thoroughly.' ¹ This estimate is confirmed by communications from Professor Lehmann, late of Copenhagen, now of Berlin, and from Professor Speyer of Leiden. The fact to be noticed, then, is that in the early Buddhistic literature, composed during a period of about two hundred years after Buddha's death, only a very few miracles are said to have been wrought by him. Many miraculous accompaniments of his birth, life, and death are affirmed; but only a very few miracles are ascribed to Buddha himself. And yet Professor Pfeleiderer says that 'the Buddhist legends are full of miracles which Buddha and his disciples are reported to have done; some of these are precisely analogous to the miracles of the Gospels, but most of them are more extraordinary.' ² For an account of these miracles we must consult works composed at a much later date than the ten groups mentioned above. Nearly all the miracles attributed to Buddha are found in books written many centuries after his death. Professor Lehmann mentions two of these books in particular, namely, the Pali text of the 'Commentary on the Jātakas,' written in Ceylon, and the *Lalita Vistara*.³ The first part of the Commentary contains a portion of the story of Buddha. Professor Rhys Davids says

¹ Letter, Feb. 17, 1912.

² *The Philosophy of Religion*, vol. iv. p. 83.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 85, 87.

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that the Commentary was written 'about the middle of the fifth century of our era.'¹ But he says also that 'this commentary is a translation into Pali of the commentary as handed down in Ceylon. That earlier commentary, now lost, was in the Singhalese language throughout, except as regards the verses, which were in Pali.'² The *Lalita Vistara* is a part of the *Abhidhamma* of the Northern Canon. It also contains a portion of the biography of Buddha. With regard to its date Professor Rhys Davids says: 'M. Foucaux has published a translation into French of a translation of this work into Tibetan. He holds the Tibetan version to have existed in the sixth century A.D. How much older the present form of the Sanskrit work may be is quite uncertain.'³ All writers agree in holding that these two works were not composed until many centuries after the death of Buddha. But it is in them, and in works still later, that we find nearly all the miracles said to have been performed by Buddha.⁴ Professor Rhys Davids illustrates the gradual growth of the miraculous element in connexion with Buddha, by arranging in chronological order the various accounts of a particular incident in his life.⁵

The subject of Miraculous Healing among the Greeks

¹ *Buddhism*, p. 13.

² *Buddhist India*, p. 207.

³ *Buddhism*, p. 11.

⁴ See Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism in Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde*, Strassburg, 1896, pp. 12-46.

⁵ *Buddhism*, pp. 13, 14.

and the Romans has been very carefully investigated by Otto Weinreich in a volume contributed to the series entitled, *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*.¹ Weinreich divides his work into three parts. In the first he deals with cures attributed to 'the hand of God.' In the second he describes cures in connexion with which dreams play a part. The last portion of the book deals with healings due in some way or other to statues and pictures.² For reasons already given, we may confine our attention to miracles attributed to persons whose historical reality is either beyond dispute or pretty generally accepted.

Apollonius of Tyana has been called 'the Pagan Christ.' He is considered to have been born about 4 B.C. 'At what age he died is uncertain. It has been put at 80, 90, or 100.'³ His life was written by Philostratus the elder, early in the third century.⁴ In

¹ *Antike Heilungswunder: Untersuchungen zum Wunderglauben der Griechen und Römer*, Giessen, 1909; cf. *Antike Wundergeschichten*, by Paul Fiebig, Bonn, 1911.

² On the subject of miracles among the Greeks see also Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen*, Leipzig, 1906.

³ Canney in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. i. pp. 610, 611.

⁴ The best edition of the text is that by Kayser, Leipzig, 1870. There are two recent translations into English, one by F. C. Conybeare in the *Loeb Classical Library* (Heinemann), in two volumes with Greek and English on opposite pages, and one by Prof. Phillimore (Clarendon Press), also in two volumes. The following also are helpful: Albert Réville, *Apollonius of Tyana*, London, 1866, and Mead, *Apollonius of Tyana*, London, 1901.

this work Apollonius is reported to have performed miracles. He is said to have transported himself miraculously from Smyrna to Ephesus.¹ At Pergamus he is reported to have cured many of their diseases ;² at Athens to have cast a demon out of a young man ;³ and at Corinth to have exorcized a demon.⁴ The most remarkable of the miracles attributed to Apollonius is the following. ‘ A girl, on the point of being married, was apparently dead, and the bridegroom was following the bier. His loud cries expressed all the bitterness of the unaccomplished marriage, and Rome was a fellow mourner with him ; for the girl belonged to a family of consular eminence. Apollonius, happening to come across the affecting incident, said, “ Let down the bier : I will stop your weeping for this damsel.” Therewith he asked what was her name. The multitude supposed that he was about to deliver a speech, in the style of those funeral orations which excite the audience to lamentation. But all he did was to touch her and add some secret form of words, and awaked the girl from her apparent death. She spoke, and returned to her father’s house, like Alcestis recalled to life by Hercules. Her family made him a present of some £5,000 ; but he said that he bestowed this sum on the girl as a dowry. Whether he found a spark of life in her, which her attendants had failed to detect—(they do say that the air being moist with rain, her breath was per-

¹ Philostratus, *Vita*, iv. 10.

² *Ibid.*, 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

ceptible)—or rekindled and recovered her life when actually extinct, is more than either I, or even the bystanders at the time, could pretend to determine.’¹ It is important for us to notice how Philostratus came to write his biography of Apollonius. The account of the matter which he himself gives is thus summarized by Mr. Canney. The book ‘ was written at the request of Julia Domna († 217), “ the patroness of every art, and the friend of every man of genius ” (Gibbon) Septimus Severus was a passionate student of magic and divination, and had chosen Julia Domna as his second wife on account of her “ royal nativity.” Philostratus’ patroness, who was also a collector of books, had been made acquainted with some memoirs by Apollonius’ disciple, Damis the Assyrian. These were not well written, and Philostratus was requested to copy them, improve the style, and in fact to compile as complete a biography as possible. He tells us himself that several “ Lives ” of Apollonius were in existence, and that to some of them—those of Maximus of Ægæ and Mæragenes—he had access. He also used letters of Apollonius. Moreover, he himself travelled into most parts of the known world, and everywhere heard the “ inspired sayings ” of Apollonius.’² The assertion that a Life of Apollonius had been previously written by Mæragenes is verified by Origen.³ But not one

¹ *Ibid.*, 45, Phillimore’s translation.

² *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. i. p. 609.

³ *Contra Celsum*, vi.

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of the works mentioned by Philostratus as constituting his sources is extant. The date of the literary evidence in our possession for the alleged miracles of Apollonius is, then, more than a hundred years later than the date of his death. And all critics agree that Philostratus's work is more or less a romance.

Hume says that 'one of the best attested miracles in all profane history, is that which Tacitus reports of Vespasian, who cured a blind man in Alexandria, by means of his spittle, and a lame man by the mere touch of his foot; in obedience to a vision of the god Serapis, who had enjoined them to have recourse to the Emperor, for these miraculous cures.'¹ According to Tacitus the second man was not lame but diseased in the hand (*manum aeger*). In this case Hume seems to be following Suetonius (*debili crure*) and not Tacitus. The first case is reported alike by the two historians.² The reign of Vespasian extended from 69 to 79 A.D. The first four books of Tacitus's *Histories* deal with the events of the years 69 and 70. This gives us approximately the date of the alleged cures. Tacitus is supposed to have been born about 54. 'It seems possible that his death took place in the first years of Hadrian (117-138).'³ The *Histories* were

¹ *Essays* (Green and Grose), vol. ii. p. 99. See also Weinreich, *op. cit.*, p. 68. The incidents are recorded in Tacitus, *Hist.*, iv. 81.

² See Suetonius, *Vesp.*, 7. Cf. Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, lxvi. 8.

³ See Bury, *A History of the Roman Empire*, 1900, p. 479.

written under Trajan (98-117). The evidence then is, roughly speaking, about forty years after the event. Suetonius lived from about 75 to 160. Consequently, he was not yet born at the time when the cures are alleged to have happened. Hume speaks in the highest terms of the character of Tacitus as a historian, and conjecturally of the character of the authorities upon whom he relied for these stories.¹ Bury does not take quite the same view. Speaking of Tacitus he says that, 'like Livy, he cared little for historical research, and was far more concerned with the form than with the matter of his work.'² With regard to Suetonius, the same writer says, 'He had good materials at his disposal, but is not critical, though, as far as we can judge, impartial in recording all that he could learn, and thought likely to be interesting.'³

It has been assumed that the apostle Paul claims miraculous powers for the Church. The significant passage is 1 Corinthians xii. 8-10. The Apostle says: 'For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; etc.'⁴ The important expressions in this passage are, *χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων* and *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων*. The question is, Does the apostle Paul say that the early

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 481.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 553.

⁴ *Cf.* verses 28; 29, 30.

Church possessed the gift of performing what would even to-day be termed miraculous? Mr. J. M. Thompson answers this question in the negative. He says that 'the phrase *χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων* claims no more than is covered . . . by the phenomena of faith-healing.'¹ He admits that '*ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων* is often interpreted as though it meant more than this.'² In view of this fact he considers it worth while 'to examine the use of *δυνάμεις* (translated as "powers," "mighty works," or "miracles") in the New Testament.' He discusses the passages in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts where the term is used.³ His conclusion is: 'This evidence is conclusive. In the only cases in which the reference of the word *δυνάμεις* is explicitly stated, it means the healing of disease, or the exorcism of evil spirits. This holds true, not only in the Gospels, but also in the Acts (xix. 11 is particularly significant).'⁴ Mr. Thompson then draws a further inference: 'It is therefore natural to suppose that St. Paul uses the word in the same sense, and that when he distinguishes *δυνάμεων* from *ἰαμάτων* he only means different degrees of the same kind of phenomena.'⁵ Now, it should be remembered that our problem in this paragraph is not what happened, but what is alleged to have happened. And it cannot be said on the ground of exegesis that 'the phrase *χαρίσ-*

¹ *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 17.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18.

⁴ P. 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*

ματα ἰαμάτων claims no more than is covered by the phenomena of faith-healing.' ¹ Taking the narratives of healing found in the Gospels and in the Acts as they stand, we are bound to admit that they are even for us to-day narratives of miracles and not of faith-healing. Again, Mr. Thompson would no doubt be right if he said that in the references to δυνάμεις in Mark ix. 39, Acts viii. 13, and Mark vi. 5, the term denotes either cases of healing or of exorcism. But we contend that he has no right to say that in these passages the term 'means the healing of disease or the exorcism of evil spirits.' Mr. Thompson's contention really is that the denotation of δυνάμεις in the Gospels and Acts is identical with that of 'healings and exorcisms.' Is this so? He makes a special point of Acts xix. 11. 'And God wrought special miracles (δυνάμεις) by the hands of Paul: insomuch that (ὥστε) unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out.' It seems to us that 'insomuch that' is not expegetetic as 'inasmuch as' would be; it introduces a consequence ² of the δυνάμεις. Take again Mark vi. 2, 14, Matthew vii. 22, xi. 20, 21, 23, and Luke xix. 37. Pure exegesis does not justify the assertion that δυνάμεις in these texts refers only to cases of healing. What exegetical reason is there for not

¹ *Supra*, Introduction, chapter ii.

² Especially as what follows could hardly be described as wrought 'by the hands of Paul.'

including 'the stilling of the tempest' and especially 'the raising of Jairus's daughter' (v. *fin.*) in the *δυνάμεις* of Mark vi. 2? And what exegetical reason is there for not including the various kinds of recorded miracles in the *δυνάμεις* of Luke xix. 37? Finally, as a pure question in exegesis it seems clear that the apostle Paul in the passage under our consideration distinguishes between *χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων* and *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων*. Meyer says: 'They (*δυνάμεις*) are in general—excluding, however, the cures already assigned to a special gift—*miraculous works*, which as the effects of a will endowed with miraculous power, may be very various according to the different occasions which determined its action. Instances of raising the dead belonged likewise to this division.'¹ The conclusion we come to, then, is that Mr. Thompson has no right to say that 'unless faith cures are miracles, St. Paul never claims miraculous powers for the Church.'² Judged merely in the light of the narrative, the cures of the New Testament are practically all miracles. And what Paul claims for the Church is not limited even to cures.

It seems, also, that the apostle Paul claimed miraculous powers for himself. In 2 Corinthians xii. 12 he says: 'Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders

¹ *Commentary, in loco.* Cf. Findlay in *Expositor's Greek Testament*. See further on 2 Cor. xii. 12, below.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

and mighty works.' ¹ The significant terms are *σημεῖα*, *τέρατα*, and *δυνάμεις*. Does the apostle claim for himself the power of doing what appears miraculous even to us to-day? Mr. Thompson answers this question again in the negative. Speaking of this particular text he says: 'In any case it claims nothing more than is covered by works of healing and exorcism.' ² By way of supporting his view, he examines the meaning of these terms in Acts. ³ 'We conclude,' he says, 'that St. Paul believed himself to possess special powers of the Holy Spirit, but that the language in which he himself describes these powers does not cover anything more than faith-healing and exorcism, which are instances of natural law, not miracles.' ⁴ One of the passages to which he refers is Acts vii. 36. But here *τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα* denote the acts of Moses 'in Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.' These acts are not confined to 'works of healing and exorcism.' Why should not Paul also use the expression *τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα* to include more than 'works of healing and exorcism'? ⁵ Further, we must repeat that the alleged acts of healing in the New Testament, judging them merely by the narrative, are still marvellous for us to-day. We conclude, therefore, that Paul does claim for himself miraculous powers.

¹ Cf. Rom. xv. 18, 19.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵ See Dr. Field, *Did it Happen?* p. 12.

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In the Book of Acts several miracles are said to have been wrought by the Apostle. We have already seen that there is very good reason for supposing that Acts was written by Luke, the companion of Paul. A certain portion of the book goes by the name of 'the We-sections.' In these sections the writer is an eye-witness of the events he records. Adopting Harnack's distribution to their respective sources of 'miracles and supernatural works of the Spirit' found in Acts, we find fourteen such events in the We-sections.¹ Several of them are miracles attributed to Paul. One of these is the incident of raising up Eutychus recorded in xx. 9-12. Commenting on *καὶ ἤρθη νεκρός*, Dr. Knowling says that 'the words positively assert that Eutychus was dead.'² Even Mr. J. M. Thompson admits that Luke believed that the man was dead. 'The importance,' he says, 'that St. Luke attaches to the incident, and the words by which he seeks to exclude a natural cure, show that he thought that St. Paul had restored a dead body to life.'³

Several of the Apocryphal Gospels are replete with miracles, especially those concerned with the childhood of Jesus.⁴ The Gospel of Thomas (in the first Greek form) says that 'Jesus was again passing through the

¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 134-140.

² *Expositor's Greek Testament*, *in loco*.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁴ We shall use the following texts: Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (1876), and *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, vol. xvi.

village ; and a boy ran up against Him, and struck His shoulder. And Jesus was angry and said to him : Thou shalt not go back the way thou camest. And immediately he fell down dead.' ¹ Later in the narrative Jesus raises to life a child who, while playing with him fell down from the house and was killed. ² In the Arabic Gospel of the Saviour's Infancy we read that ' when the Lord Jesus had completed seven years from His birth, on a certain day He was occupied with boys of His own age. For they were playing among clay, from which they were making images of asses, oxen, birds, and other animals ; and each one boasting of his skill, was praising his own work. Then the Lord Jesus said to the boys : The images that I have made I will order to walk. The boys asked Him whether then He were the son of the Creator ; and the Lord Jesus bade them walk. And they immediately began to leap ; and then, when He had given them leave, they again stood still.' ³ As to date Professor Tasker says, with regard to the Gospel of Thomas, that ' a legitimate inference from the evidence already given is that in its original form it was written c. 160-180. But Harnack does well to add that it is impossible to say certainly how much of the Gospel in its present form was derived

¹ Tischendorf, *op. cit.*, p. 143, and *Ante-Nicene Library*, vol. xvi. p. 79.

² Tischendorf, *op. cit.*, pp. 149, 150, and *Ante-Nicene Library*, vol. xvi. pp. 81, 82.

³ Tischendorf, *op. cit.*, p. 200, and *Ante-Nicene Library*, vol. xvi. p. 117.

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from the longer work.' ¹ With regard to the date of the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, the same writer says that, 'no definite date for the composition of this Gospel can be fixed. Lipsius is content to say that it was compiled "comparatively late, but probably earlier than the Mahometan times."'²

Similarly the Apocryphal Acts of certain Apostles—Peter, Paul, John, Thomas ³—which in their oldest form date from the latter half of the second century, record miracles of healing and of raising the dead in a matter of course fashion which suggests that their authors felt this quite the right thing, seeing that the canonical Acts of the Apostles contained miracles. They present, however, for the most part a marked contrast with their models in point of verisimilitude and moral fitness.

The subject of Ecclesiastical Miracles during the first five centuries has been discussed by Conyers Middleton, sometime Principal Librarian of the University of Cambridge. His book, entitled *A Free Enquiry into the Miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church from the earliest Ages through several successive centuries*, was published in December, 1748. It was an epoch-making work. A full account of the controversy which it

¹ Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. v. p. 432.

² *Ibid.*, p. 433.

³ See *Apocryphal Acts*, translated and edited by B. Pick (Open Court Publishing Co.), 1909; e.g. pp. 43 f., 53, 59.

originated is given by Lecky.¹ After an elaborate Introductory Discourse, which had been published separately in April, 1747, Middleton proceeds 'to draw out, in their proper order, all the principal testimonies, which relate to the miraculous gifts of the Church, as they are found in the writings of the Fathers from the earliest ages, after the days of the Apostles.'² He deals in succession with the testimonies from the first century, the second and third centuries, and the fourth and fifth.³ With regard to the Apostolic Fathers he says that 'there is not the least claim or pretension, to any of those extraordinary gifts, which are the subject of this inquiry; nor to any standing power of working miracles, as residing still among them, for the conversion of the Heathen world.'⁴ But the case is totally different with their successors. We have a few references to the dead being raised up. Irenæus⁵ contrasts the impotence of the heretics to raise the dead, like the Lord did and the Apostles through prayer, with what has happened 'often in the Brotherhood,' in which owing to the urgency of the prayer of the whole local church, asking with fasting and

¹ *The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe* (1890), vol. i. pp. 151-159.

² *Miscellaneous Works* (1755), vol i. p. 121.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 122-130; 130-140; 257-321.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 123. But it should be remembered with regard to the Apostolic Fathers that their subject-matter did not invite references to such topics as miracles.

⁵ *Haer.*, ii. 31.

much entreaty, 'the spirit of the dead man has returned and the man was graciously granted to the prayers of the saints.' No instance is given, and there is no more detail. But we may place here a reference not given by Middleton. Eusebius says: 'That the Apostle Philip continued at Hierapolis, with his daughters, has been already stated above. But we must now show how Papias, living at the same date, received a wonderful account from the daughters of Philip. For he writes that in his (Philip's) time there was one raised from the dead.' ¹ Again, Middleton refers to Augustine as an authority that 'five different persons were raised even from death to life.' ² The references to miracles of healing are far more numerous. Irenæus says: 'The true disciples of Jesus, receiving grace from Him, perform miracles in His name, for the good of the rest of mankind, according to the gift which each man has received from Him. For some cast out demons securely and truly, so that those from whom they are ejected often turn believers, and are in the Church: others have fore-knowledge of future events and visions, and prophetic utterances: others heal the sick by the imposition of hands. And ere now, as we said, even the dead have been raised, and lived

¹ *Eccles. Hist.*, iii. 39. He goes on to mention the case of Justus Barsabbas, who drank poison without hurt (*cf.* the appendix to Mark xvi. 18). For a more detailed reference to Papias' account of these cases, see Fragments from Papias, in Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers* (one vol. edition).

² *Op. cit.*, p. 271.

afterwards a number of years among us. And what more? It is impossible to reckon up the divine gifts (*charismata*) which the world over the Church . . . performs every day; for the benefit of the nations, neither deceiving nor making a gain of any; but as freely it received of God, freely also it ministers.' ¹ Origen also says: 'Some, in proof of a miraculous power received through faith in Christ, heal the sick, by invoking on them simply the name of the supreme God and that of Jesus, with recital of something touching His life. I myself have seen many so healed of grievous calamities and insanities and madresses, and innumerable other evils, which neither men nor demons have cured.' ² It is not necessary for us to follow Middleton in his exhibition of the testimonies of Tertullian, Jerome, Eusebius, Chrysostom, Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, Athanasius, and Epiphanius. ³ These writers refer to miracles of all kinds.

Many miracles have been attributed to Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. ⁴ Only a very few are said to have been wrought by him during his lifetime. Becket was murdered on Tuesday, September

¹ *Haer.*, ii. 32.

² *C. Celsum*, iii. 24.

³ See *op. cit.*, pp. 200; 201; 254, 255; 265; 265-275; 275, 276; 276-280; 280, 281.

⁴ See *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, 7 vols., edited by the Rev. J. C. Robertson, Canon of Canterbury, Rolls Series, London, 1875-1885; and Dr. Edwin A. Abbott, *St. Thomas of Canterbury: his Death and Miracles*, 2 vols., 1898.

29, 1170, and immediately cures began to be attributed to his influence. Before 1175, Benedict, a monk of Canterbury, afterwards of Peterborough, completed his *Miracula Sancti Thomæ*, giving an account of the acts said to have been wrought by Becket after his death.¹ Benedict was an eye-witness of the murder. His work is in six books, and contains a large number of miracles. The first case happened a few days after the murder. Emma, wife of a knight in Sussex, wept for Becket as a martyr, and, while weeping and praying, recovered from a temporary attack of blindness.² This miracle is recorded also by Grim, another eye-witness of the murder.³ The miracles recorded by Benedict in the first two books of his work are mainly cures, and cures of nervous disorders. In the later books we find cases of Canterbury water changed into blood, of restoration to life, and many other things of a similar character.⁴ William of Canterbury, also, published an account of Becket's miracles, in six books. His work must have been published before 1189. But most of the important miracles toward the end of William's treatise took place in 1174, and it was probably presented to the King, in its original form, about 1177.⁵ We notice a difference in his case, also, between the events recorded in the later books and those found

¹ *Materials*, vol. ii. ; Abbott, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 15.

² *Materials*, vol. ii. pp. 37, 38.

³ *Materials*, vol. ii. p. 440.

⁴ *Materials*, vol. ii. pp. 118 ff.

⁵ Abbott, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 14.

in the earlier ones. But William gives an instance of restoration to life near the beginning of his second book.¹ In the later books we get instances of the water of Canterbury changed to milk, of the revivification of a sucking-pig, and of a gander, of a babe singing 'Kyrie Eleison,' of bird-miracles—of a starling, seized by a kite, invoking St. Thomas, and the kite, releasing its prey, dropping down dead—and of the revivification of a cow.² It is to Benedict and William, mainly, that we are indebted for accounts of the miracles of Becket. Benedict was a monk of Canterbury, Prior from 1175 to 1177. Dr. Edwin Abbott says that 'the miracles at Becket's tomb, or in connexion with Becket's name, seem to have begun almost immediately after the night of his death. It became necessary to appoint a special monk to sit near the tomb to receive offerings: and on him it naturally devolved to hear the accounts of these marvels and to report them to the Chapter of the brethren, before whom, says Fitzstephen, they were publicly read.'³ Now Benedict was the first appointed to report the miracles.⁴ Of his character, Dr. Abbott speaks as follows: 'He seems to have been well adapted for the task, a man of (comparatively) simple and unaffected style, peculiarly accurate (for those times) in matters of chronology,

¹ *Materials*, vol. i. pp. 160 ff.

² *Materials*, vol. i. pp. 354; 358, 359; 361, 362; 388, 389; 529, 530; 536.

³ *Op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 223.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

free from exaggeration, and disposed to suspect exaggeration and imposture in others. . . . In some cases, Benedict frankly tells us that the cure was not at first perfect, in others, that it was followed by relapse. In one case he informs us that the reputed water of St. Thomas was not St. Thomas's at all. It was a fraudulent imitation; yet it performed the desired cure.' ¹ The same writer says further: 'Benedict's testimony has this singular value, that, in the early days of the miracles, it appears to have been set down in writing at the time, as each miracle occurred or came to the knowledge of the monks. . . . In some cases, where the cure was wrought in the Cathedral, he was an eye-witness of the alleged miracle itself, and, in others, of the consequences of the miracle—attested by the patient afterwards coming to the Martyr's tomb, accompanied by witnesses corroborating the patient's statement and offering themselves for examination by the monk whose business it was to test the evidence.' ² There are indications that the monks became dissatisfied with Benedict's performances of his duty. They thought that he was too scrupulous. So, about May, 1172, they called William to his aid. Benedict's later books are supposed to have been written with the assistance of William.³ William also was a monk of Canterbury. Speaking generally of William's work, Dr. Abbott says: 'In the early days of miracles,

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, pp. 247, 248.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 228, 229; 301; 302-306.

the chronicler could not afford to be a chooser ; but now, with so vast a multitude of instances, William was well able to select those that were best authenticated, or most edifying, or most interesting—in some cases, we may say, most amusing.’¹ And again, he says : ‘ We shall look in vain here for those graphic descriptions of cures at the tomb, some of them incomplete, some followed by relapses, which Benedict gives us so frequently, thereby establishing his character at once for veracity, candour, and (so far as observable facts go, distinguished from inferences) for careful observation. And as William’s book professedly ignores chronological order, it throws no light at all on any developments, changes, or deteriorations, that may have taken place in the manifestations at the tomb or elsewhere. However, it does contain a good many important letters attesting distant miracles.’²

We shall consider next the miracles attributed to Francis of Assisi.³ He died in 1226. Thomas of Celano published two *Lives* of Francis. The first is divided into three parts. In the first part several miracles are attributed to Francis. One is a case of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

² *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 4.

³ See d’Alençon, *S. Francisci Assisiensis Vita et Miracula*, Auctore Fr. Thoma de Celano, Romae, 1906 ; Howell, *The Lives of S. Francis of Assisi by Brother Thomas of Celano*, London, 1908 ; Bonaventura, *Legenda in Opera*, Lyons, 1680, vol. vii. ; The *Fioretti*, The Temple Classics, 1910 ; P. Sabatier, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi* ; Tamassia, *Saint Francis of Assisi and his Legend*, 1910 ; Jørgensen, *St. Francis of Assisi* ; Cuthbert, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*.

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multiplying provisions ; another of turning water into wine.¹ But the large majority are cases of healing.² In some instances the healing was due directly to Francis ; in other cases it was due to him only indirectly, through the patients touching articles which had been worn or used by him. There are no miracles recorded in the second part of the *First Life*. The third part is 'concerning the Canonization of our Blessed Father Francis, and concerning his miracles.' There is a full list of 'the miracles which were read before the Lord Pope Gregory, and proclaimed to the people.' They are 'of the healing of the crooked,' 'of the blind receiving sight,' 'of the healing of demoniacs,' 'of sick persons saved from death, of cases of swelling, dropsy, arthritis, paralysis and other diseases,' 'of the cleansing of lepers,' 'of the dumb speaking and the deaf hearing.'³ These are nearly all alleged to have happened after Francis's death. In d'Alençon's edition, the *Second Life* by Thomas of Celano is divided into two parts. In the first part there are no miracles said to have been wrought by Francis. In the second part a few are recorded, but there are no miracles of healing among them. He is said to have brought water out of a rock, to have turned money into a snake, to have converted a piece of capon into a fish.⁴ The bishop of Assisi was struck dumb because he had disturbed Francis's

¹ 1 *Celano*, section 55 ; *ibid.*, 61.

² 1 *Celano*, 62-70, 87.

³ 1 *Celano*, 127-151.

⁴ 2 *Celano*, 46, 68, 78, 79.

devotions ;¹ and relics of the Saints were miraculously conveyed from an abandoned church at Monte Casale to the ' place ' of the brethren.² In his edition of the *Lives of Francis by Thomas of Celano*, d'Alençon includes a *Tractatus de Miraculis*.³ In it it is shown how Francis had dominion over inanimate nature.⁴ The brute creation was subject to his power.⁵ Persons were raised from the dead ; others were saved from the jaws of death.⁶ And many instances of healing, and of other miraculous events, are recorded.⁷ In the *Life of Francis* by Bonaventura there is ' an innumerable quantity of miracles, great and small.'⁸ The *Fioretti*, also, contain a number of miracles of a striking character. Francis wrought miracles on birds, and on a fierce wolf ;⁹ and he caused a vineyard, which had been robbed and despoiled of its grapes, to yield more wine than ever before.¹⁰ Celano's *First Life* was composed between July 1228 and February 1229 by commission of Pope Gregory IX. Howell says : ' It is to be observed that Thomas of Celano, though he had some personal recollections of S. Francis, was in all probability absent from Italy during the closing year of the Saint's life. . . . In any case he did not belong to the inner circle of the Saint's closest companions. He

¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

² *Ibid.*, p. 202.

³ *Tractatus*, sections 14-19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-48, and 49-69.

⁵ Sabatier, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

⁶ *Fioretti*, chapters xvi., xxii., and xxi.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, chapter xix.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 339-432.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20-32.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 70-198.

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was however in entire sympathy with them, and we cannot doubt that they furnished him with much of the material of which the *First Life* is composed.’¹ Speaking of the same work Sabatier says that ‘the testimony (it contains) at once makes itself felt as sincere and true.’² Tamassia, however, takes a very different view. The mildest thing he says is that ‘the luxuriant rhetorical foliage of the *First Life* scarcely allows any outlet for the subtle perfume of that mystic flower which opened on the serene Umbrian hill.’³ The *Second Life* was composed between 1246 and 1247.⁴ With regard to this Howell says: ‘As regards the *Second Life*, which is in the nature of a supplement to the *First*, the Saint’s trusted companions occupy a more prominent position. We might almost go so far as to describe them as the authors of the work, and Thomas as the editor who cast their material into a literary form, adding somewhat of his own.’⁵ Speaking of the two *Lives*, the same writer says: ‘I do not think that one can study Thomas of Celano’s “*Lives*” without being convinced that, making the necessary allowances I have indicated, they constitute a truthful and not unworthy memorial of that Christ-like life and

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. ix.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 367.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁴ See Tamassia, *op. cit.*, p. 49, and Howell, *op. cit.*, pp. vii., xi. Sabatier seems to be wrong in supposing that the second part of the *Second Life* was written at a later date than the first part.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. ix., x. Cf. Sabatier, *op. cit.*, pp. 385-389.

character that have endeared S. Francis to men of every age, and of every religious persuasion.' ¹ Tamasia, on the other hand, describes the *Second Life* as being 'possibly the *chef d'œuvre* of monastic imposture in the thirteenth century.' ² It is not easy to determine the date and authorship of the *Tractatus*. There is evidence that Thomas of Celano was commanded by John of Parma (Minister-General from 1247 to 1257) to write a 'second treatise' in completion of the *Second Life*.³ Whether the *Tractatus* is this 'second treatise' is not decided with certainty. Howell says that it 'was probably composed after 1255 . . . and is perhaps also the work of Thomas of Celano: but it cannot be assigned to him with absolute certainty.' ⁴ In 1260 Bonaventura was commissioned to write a new life of Francis. The work was completed by 1263.⁵ The *Fioretti* is a work of the fourteenth century.⁶ In relation to Francis's miracles we have to remember the tendency to assimilate his life to that of Christ himself, of which the work entitled *The Conformities* is a patent proof.

'Upwards of two hundred miracles of Ignatius of Loyola were laid before the Pope, when his canonization

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. xx.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

³ See *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals* (fourteenth century authority) in *Analecta Franciscana*, iii. 276; and cf. Glassberger (sixteenth century) in *Anal. Fran.*, ii. 73.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. viii.

⁵ Sabatier, *op. cit.*, pp. 393, 395.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 415. Cf. *Fioretti* (The Temple Classics), p. 317.

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was in question—miracles beside which those of our Lord shrink into insignificance.’¹ Ignatius died in 1557. In 1572, Ribadeneira, from his youth an eye-witness and admirer of Ignatius, published his *Vita I. Loyolae*. In this work no miracles are said to have been wrought by Ignatius. More than this, the author explains at length why miracles were not performed by him. In 1585 Maffei published his *De Vita et Moribus S. Ignatii Loyolae Libri tres*. Here also no miracles are attributed to Ignatius. A second edition of Ribadeneira’s work appeared in 1587. This is an enlarged edition, but it makes no reference to miracles. In 1612, however, in an abridgment of his work, Ribadeneira ascribes miracles to Ignatius; ‘telling us, as his reason for not inserting such accounts before, that though he had heard of them in 1572, they were not sufficiently authenticated at that time.’² Ignatius was canonized in 1622.

A still larger number of miracles are attributed to Loyola’s great disciple, Francis Xavier. He died in 1552, having spent the later years of his life as missionary in the East. In 1589 there was printed a work by Acosta, who himself had been a missionary among the Indians. The work was entitled, *De Procurandâ*

¹ Trench, *Notes on the Miracles*, p. 55.

² Douglas, *The Criterion; or Rules by which the true miracles recorded in the New Testament are distinguished from the spurious miracles of Pagans and Papists*, new edition, 1807, p. 69. Cf. Trench, *op. cit.*, pp. 54–56.

Indorum Salute. The author states that no miracles had ever been performed by missionaries among the Indians.¹ During the ten years he was away in the East, including those spent in China and Japan, Xavier corresponded with his friends and the superiors of his order in Europe. These letters have been published as *S. Francisci Xaverii Epistolarum Libri tres*, Pragae, 1750.² They contain no reference to miracles. In 1594, however, Tursellinus published the first edition of his *Vita Fr. Xaverii*. Several miracles are alleged by him to have been wrought by Xavier in India. In 1610 a second edition of the *Vita* appeared. In the Preface to this edition Tursellinus says that in the first edition he was compelled to confine himself to the miracles performed by Xavier at the settlements of the Portuguese. The remaining things done by him, particularly among the Chinese and Japanese, had for the most part lain in silence and darkness. So when lately these also, as written down by those who at the time were among the Chinese or Japanese, had reached his hands, he turned them into Latin and wove them faithfully into their context. He states that he used all possible care to avoid omission or inaccuracy. At the beginning of the sixth book he says that the King of Portugal wrote to his viceroy in India, at the end of March, 1556, commanding him to send him a full and

¹ Douglas, *The Criterion*, p. 74.

² Douglas, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-78. Cf. Trench, *Notes on the Miracles*, p. 56.

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careful report of Francis Xavier's deeds and miracles *cum testimoniis auctoritatibusque omnibus*, signed by the official seal. These were sent to Rome to serve as a basis for Xavier's canonization. Tursellinus states that a copy of these documents was used by him for the second edition of his work.¹ Xavier was beatified—declared to be already among the blessed in 1619, and canonized in 1622.

The evidence for the miracles of the Abbé Paris has been declared to be exceptionally good. A sketch of his life is given by Douglas. He died in 1729, 'and was buried in the church-yard of St. Medard at Paris, near the South wall of the church, a tombstone being put up that covered the extent of his grave, which, from the time of his death, was frequented by his admirers. The number of worshippers increasing daily, an opinion of the efficacy of worshipping there gained ground also. By degrees it was rumoured about, that the sick had by their prayers at the tomb been restored to health ; and cures of an astonishing nature had been wrought by the intercession of the blessed Deacon ; till, at length, in the year 1731 these reports having put the whole city of Paris in a ferment, and St. Medard's Church-yard being crowded from morning to night with sick praying for relief, the civil magistrate, unable

¹ The above description of the second edition is based on notes kindly sent to the Lecturer by Dr. Vernon Bartlet, who consulted a copy of it in the Bodleian Library. Cf. Douglas, *The Criterion*, pp. 78, 79.

by any other means to stem the torrents and close the list of miracles, fell upon the expedient of debarring all approach to the scene of wonders, by walling up the sepulchre.' ¹ During the course of the year 1731 a large number of pamphlets for and against the miracles were published. Several of these pamphlets described minutely the cases of alleged miracles, and supplied evidence in support of them. ² In 1732 a work appeared described as a Collection of the miracles of the Abbé. ³ Other Collections were published at intervals. And several of these Collections were published in a three volume edition at Utrecht between 1733 and 1736. In 1734 the Archbishop of Sens published the first two parts of his *Instruction Pastorale* on what he called the 'alleged miracles' of the Abbé Paris. The third part appeared in 1735. In 1737 there appeared Montgeron's famous work. ⁴ This book is in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and through the kindness of Dr. Vernon Bartlet the Lecturer is able to give a summary of its contents. Montgeron was a well-known lawyer and judge (born 1686). He was converted from un-

¹ Douglas, *The Criterion*, pp. 123, 124.

² E.g., *Acte passé pardevant notaires au sujet du miracle opéré en la personne de Mdle. Louise Hardouin (1731)*; *Acte passé pardevant notaires au sujet de Gabr. Gautier, veuve, frappée de paralysie au tombeau de l'abbé de Paris (1731)*.

³ *Recueil des Miracles opérés au Tombeau de M. de Paris (Paris, 1732)*.

⁴ *La vérité des miracles opérés par l'intercession de M. de Paris, démontrée contre M. l'archevêque de Sens, Utrecht, 1737*.

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belief in Christianity to faith at the Tomb of F. de Paris on September 7, 1731. He wrote an account of his conversion on September 20, 1736, and inserted it at the beginning of his book on the miracles of the Abbé. Then there follows an Essay on the belief due to Testimony, and thereafter a series of eight Demonstrations of miracles worked at Paris's tomb on various persons, the eighth case being that of Louise Hardouin, the subject of one of the pamphlets in 1731. He then draws the Conclusion, and replies to the principal objections made. Credentials are appended to each of the eight Demonstrations. Hume, writing in 1739, speaks in the highest terms of the evidence in support of the miracles of the Abbé Paris.¹ Middleton, also, in 1748 writes to the same effect.² In 1754 Douglas published *The Criterion*, a work to which reference has already been made. In this book he subjects the Abbé's miracles to a full and careful examination. The main points of his criticism are the following. He claims that fraud and imposture were detected in many instances.³ In many of the cases alleged, however, no fraud was detected.⁴ Miracles may be divided into two classes, namely, effects which are in themselves marvellous, and those which are not in themselves marvellous but become so on account of the manner in which and the circumstances under which they are

¹ *Essays*, vol. ii. pp. 101, 102.

² *Free Inquiry*, pp. 357-359.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 126-129.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

produced.¹ None of the miracles recorded by Montgeron are of the former kind.² But in no case should an event be regarded as miraculous unless it is impossible to consider it as non-miraculous.³ In some of the cases reported by Montgeron there are indications that ordinary causes were already in operation at the time when the alleged miracle occurred. Some of the patients were already on the way towards recovery.⁴ But this does not apply to all the cases. It is interesting to notice what Douglas says with regard to the case of Margaret Thibault. 'I cannot find the least defect, in the evidence urged in support of the cure of Margaret Thibault. The reality of her disease is attested to us by six physicians (he gives their names), three of whom examined her only two days before she went to the tomb, and having seen her again, immediately after her return from it, bear witness to an amazing change wrought upon her health, a change, which crowds of spectators, present with her at the tomb, also attest. Nor can the Archbishop of Sens invalidate the truth of this, contenting himself with a certificate of Mr. Silva, physician to the Duke of Orleans; which indeed proves that her cure was not complete, she not having recovered the use of two of her fingers, but does not affect the evidence brought to prove that she was freed from other symptoms.'⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 148.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 132-140.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-146.

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But even in this case, and in others like it, it may be possible to assign ordinary causes sufficient to account for the benefit received.¹ Douglas enters into a discussion of the effect of mind on body, for evil and for good.² Applying the results of his investigation to the miracles of the Abbé, he says that the diseases were of such a nature as could be overcome by the action of the mind on the body ; that the cures in question were performed on persons whose minds were neither under any natural, nor under any accidental incapacity of affecting the habit of the body ; that the supplicants who received any benefit, *actually* had their minds so prepared and disposed, and such passions excited in them, as were likely to have an effect on the habit of the body, and relieve them under their distress ; and that from the accounts which we have, of the circumstances attending the prayers of those who received relief at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, we are certain that the *enthusiastic* confidence with which their minds were impressed, *actually* did affect their bodies in such a manner as to become a cause, the operation of which had a visible tendency, and remarkable efficacy, to work a favourable change on their health.³ Douglas adds a few observations to strengthen his conclusion. Several of the patients made frequent applications to the saint ; most, if not all, of the cures were not complete ; in some cases the relief was only

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 151-171.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 172 ; 173 ; 173-178 ; 178-183.

temporary ; and the majority of the supplicants obtained no relief.¹

Lastly, we shall refer to the miracles attributed to the 'King's touch.' Several writers have discussed the subject fully.² Douglas describes well attested instances of cures ascribed to the touch of Queen Anne (1702-1714). He says : 'I have in my eye the late Mr. Dicken, sergeant-surgeon to Queen Anne, a gentleman well known for eminence in his profession. That he had opportunities of knowing the truth must be allowed, for all who were to be touched were first examined by him before they were brought to her majesty ; and he made no secret in bearing witness to the certainty of some of the cures.'³ Douglas holds that indications are present in these cases, also, that the cures were due to the influence of mind over body.⁴

The data in the case of several cycles of extraordinary Evangelic miracles having been presented, we shall now proceed to draw our conclusions respecting the historicity of the alleged events. We feel that many of them are clearly not sufficiently accredited to justify belief in their historicity.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 185 ; 188 ; 190 ; 191.

² See Polydore Virgil, *History of England*, published in the reign of Henry VII ; Tooker, *Charisma* (1597) ; Wiseman, *Chirurgicall Treatises* (1676) ; Beckett, *Enquiry into the Antiquity and Efficacy of Touching for the Cure of the King's Evil* (1722) ; cf. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder*, pp. 65, 66.

³ *The Criterion*, pp. 203-205.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-210.

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In some cases the narratives, even as they stand, are no longer miraculous for us to-day. Several of the cures are explicable on the principles of faith healing. There is clear evidence that the patients suffered from nervous disorders, which were amenable to psychotherapeutic treatment. This applies to many of those who were cured at the tomb of Becket and that of the Abbé Paris.

As we have seen, it is agreed by all critics that the work of Philostratus is more or less a romance. This fact is enough in itself to cast doubt on some of the miraculous things attributed by him to Apollonius. The Apocryphal Gospels and Acts also were written simply for the purposes of edification, in the spirit of a modern romance, and with no sense of historic responsibility.

The date of the evidence in connexion with some of the miraculous narratives which we have just considered, is highly unsatisfactory. In several cases it is very late. It is so in regard to the miracles recorded in the Old Testament, in the Buddhistic literature, and in some of the Lives of the Saints.

In some cases we feel that the opportunities of knowing the facts which our authorities possessed were very poor. In the case of Xavier, for example, Tursellinus published his *Life of Francis* in Europe, while the alleged miracles relate to the missionary work of Xavier in Asia—in India and Japan. No doubt, as the author affirms, the Viceroy sent reports from India

to the King of Portugal ; and he affirms also that reports from the farther East reached his own hands. But the care and competence, to say no more, of the witnesses behind these reports remain uncertified to our minds ; and Tursellinus had no chance of being able to vouch for them in these respects.

Further, no doubt Middleton's language as to the character of the Fathers of the Church as witnesses is often too strong and his charges too indiscriminate—particularly in the case of those down to Origen : in the case of the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, too, their miraculous narratives, may usually be attributed to causes other than conscious credulity, exaggeration or pious fraud. But there are indications that some of the alleged miracles of later Church History, at any rate, were conscious fictions in the interests of ' piety,' in order to support an institution or a doctrine, or to glorify a saint. Where they were felt to be a *sine qua non* of Canonization, there was a special factor making for them. In the case of Xavier, we have to bear in mind the damaging silence of Acosta's work as to India, and of Xavier's own letters describing his whole work in the East.

Some of the miraculous narratives which we have considered in the present chapter are due to assimilation. This is true of those contained in the Apocryphal Acts of certain of the Apostles, and of some of those attributed to Francis of Assisi. It is manifest that many later alleged miracles have gained credence owing

to a belief that miracles were to be expected in connexion with a faith flowing from the Christ of the Gospels.

Others have clearly grown from non-miraculous accounts. An instance of this was found in the Late Priestly narrative of the passage through the Red Sea. It is amply illustrated also by Professor Rhys Davids in connexion with Buddha.

In the case of well attested cures such as those wrought at the tombs of Becket and the Abbé Paris, though the narratives in several instances must be admitted to contain a miraculous element even for us to-day, still it is fair to infer that the cures were brought about through an 'emotional shock.' For one thing, the circumstances of the cures were in the main the same as in those cases in which even the face value of the narratives shows them to be instances of faith healing. And for another thing, when the cures were wrought at the tomb of a dead man we have no right to assume, judging the matter from our present point of view, that they could be brought about in any other way.

We conclude, therefore, that many stories of miracles are not true. Stories of miracles emerge, and are believed by many, which must be discredited. The phenomenon is not limited to one age, or country, or religion. And the miraculous element in certain stories grows as they are repeated. The origin of stories of miracles is due, in many cases, to deception and delusion; and with regard to the credence given to such

stories, it is perfectly true that many men are instinctively credulous.

But we have no right to infer from the mere fact that many stories of miracles are not true, that the alleged miracles of Jesus as a class must be rejected. As Dr. Gwatkin says, it is 'the first rule of investigation that everything is to be judged by its own evidence and not by the evidence of something else,'¹ though, of course, due weight should be given to all true analogy.

The credibility of the miracles of Jesus would be affected, of course, if in the study of other miracles some explanation of the origin of false stories had been discovered which could be applied to the narratives in the Gospels. But in the case of the many stories of miracles which we regard as untrue, their origin is seen to be due to invention or delusion. We have already examined attempts to explain the origin of the Gospel narratives by the same factors, and have found them inadequate.²

Again, the credibility of the miracles of Jesus would be affected if it could be shown that the credentials of the miracles which are rejected are equally strong. That they are so has been claimed over and over again. Sometimes the matter is put the other way: it is said that the credentials of the Gospel miracles are equally weak. 'The miracles of Jesus and his Apostles, related in the New Testament, were not supported by

¹ *The Knowledge of God*, vol. i. p. 190.

² Book i., chapter iv.

stronger evidences than were the prodigies that disgrace the pages of Livy, and the Legendary Tales that swell the lives of the Romish saints.' ¹

In view of this contention, a comparison of credentials is necessary. Since miracles are unusual events, we have already admitted that the evidence in support of them must be exceptionally strong before their historicity can be allowed.² We now admit further, that the credentials of miracles whose historicity is not to be rejected must be far better than those of miracles which are rejected.

When we are considering the value of evidence, we should take into account its date, the place from which it emanates, and the persons who supply it. In connexion with the witnesses, the opportunities which they had of knowing the truth should be considered, as well as their character. Now, taking all these points together, we venture to say that the evidence for the miracles of Jesus is vastly superior to the evidence for the many stories of miracles which we reject.³ With regard to our authorities for the miracles of Jesus, Dr. Fairbairn says : ' The Evangelists are the most modern writers of Christian antiquity.' ⁴

We may institute a comparison between the alleged miracles of Jesus and the stories of miracles which are

¹ In Douglas, *The Criterion*, p. 4.

² Book i., chapter i.

³ See *supra*, book i., chapters ii. and iii.

⁴ *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 337.

discredited in one or two other respects. Attention is frequently drawn to the close connexion existing in the Gospels between the miraculous narratives and the rest of the history.¹ Now this does not exist at all in the case of many of the cycles of miracles which are rejected, and it does not exist to the same degree in connexion with any one of them. Further, in the Gospels we find a large number of indirect references to the miracles of Jesus.² This again is a phenomenon which is almost entirely absent in the case of the other cycles of miracles which have been under our consideration in the present chapter.

The conclusion to which we come, then, as the result of a comparative study of credentials, is that those, taking them as a whole, of the miracles of Jesus are greatly superior to the credentials of the stories of miracles which we regard as untrue.

But we have not yet drawn the whole of our conclusion from the data presented above in connexion with other cycles of miracles. The Epistles of Paul are earlier in date than the Gospels. But these epistles assume, as we have seen, that miracles were wrought through Paul and others (especially apostles) in the name and power of Jesus. The implication is that it was already assumed that Jesus himself wrought miracles. Further, the evidence in connexion with some of the alleged miracles mentioned in the present chapter is

¹ *Supra*, book i., chapter v.

² *Supra*, book i., chapter vi.

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very strong. This is true, in particular, of the miracles attributed to the first Apostles and to the Apostolic Church. And this fact may legitimately be regarded as affording further corroborative evidence in support of the historicity of the miracles of Jesus.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

BEFORE proceeding to draw our conclusion from the consideration of the evidence for the miracles attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, it may be well to summarize the argument up to this point.

We started by enumerating the alleged facts. The narratives describing these facts are forty-six in number. Some of them are general, others are special; some describe what have been called nature miracles, others describe miracles of healing. Speaking generally, the narratives judged by their face value are miraculous even for us to-day. And we came to the conclusion that the Evangelists intended their narratives to be regarded as 'literal history.'

Our problem was stated as follows: Did Jesus perform the acts attributed to him?

Neither Science nor Logic will undertake to say that such acts, regarded merely as such, are impossible. And History will not say that it is impossible to obtain evidence sufficiently strong to accredit such acts. All

it says is that as the acts are unusual the evidence must be particularly strong.

We considered the dates of the evidence in our possession with regard to the miracles of Jesus. The earliest writings in the New Testament are the Epistles of Paul. These imply a belief that Jesus wrought miracles. But it is in the Gospels that these miracles are described; and we saw that we have three lines of tradition prior to the year 70 in support of them.

With regard to the authors of the Gospels, we concluded that there is a strong balance of evidence in support of attributing the authorship of the Third and Second Gospels to Luke and John Mark respectively. It was pointed out that Luke had Mark for a companion for a period, and that in company with Paul he visited Jerusalem and was apparently with him for two years in Cæsarea, where Philip lived. A reference was made to his culture. The friendship of Mark with Peter was indicated, and it was surmised that he must have had a good education. We concluded further that it is probable that the Fourth Gospel embodies the witness of John, the son of Zebedee. It is true that it is maintained that there are indications of a 'spiritualizing' tendency in the Fourth Gospel. But it may be argued that such a tendency would make its author inclined to dispense with miraculous 'signs,' had not such phenomena been too deeply rooted in the Evangelic oral tradition to admit of this. We found that it is highly probable that Peter is responsible, directly or

indirectly, for much that is found in our Second Gospel, including several of the miraculous narratives ; and that there is a strong balance of probability that Matthew was, if not the author of, at any rate the authority behind, one of the primitive sources of the Gospels, a source (Q) which contained narratives of miracles.

It does not appear that much 'deduction' can be made from the face value of our narratives on historical grounds. It has been claimed that this is possible ; but the attempts made to tone down the narratives are largely mere conjectures. Nor does it appear that we can on historical grounds discredit any of the narratives in their entirety.

We argued that some at least of the general narratives lend credibility to those giving detailed accounts. The congruity of the motives assigned to the miracles of Jesus with his character as otherwise known was pointed out. The intimate relation of the miraculous narratives with the rest of Gospel history was also indicated.

Several considerations were mentioned which may be looked upon as corroborative evidence in support of the credibility of the miracles of Jesus.

We studied at some length other cycles of alleged miracles. Many of these we reject on historical grounds : there are indications present that they are due either to invention or to mistake. But taking them as a whole the credentials of the miracles of Jesus are far

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superior to those of the miracles which we discredit. And further, the evidence for some of the other miracles is so good that we may look upon this fact as constituting an additional corroborative evidence for the miracles under our special consideration.

In conclusion, we may note that some of the miracles of Jesus appear to be better attested than others. Twenty-three of our narratives are found in Mark's Gospel. Of these, one, namely (26), is found also in the other three Gospels; twelve, namely (6), (7), (10), (12), (13), (15), (19), (20), (21), (22), (34), and (43), are found in Luke and Matthew; one, namely (5), in Luke; one, namely (27), in Matthew and John; five namely (23), (28), (29), (32), and (44), in Matthew;¹ and three, namely (8), (30), and (33), in Mark alone. The twenty-three miracles found in Mark include representatives of each of the classes under which the miracles of Jesus have been arranged. Three of our narratives, namely (11), (25), and (37), are found in Luke and Matthew only; six, namely (16), (17), (38), (39), (42), and (46), in Luke only; eight, namely (9), (14), (18), (24), (31), (36), (41), and (45), in Matthew only; and six, namely (1), (2), (3), (4), (35), and (40), in John only.

We conclude also that we are not justified on purely historical grounds in saying that any considerable

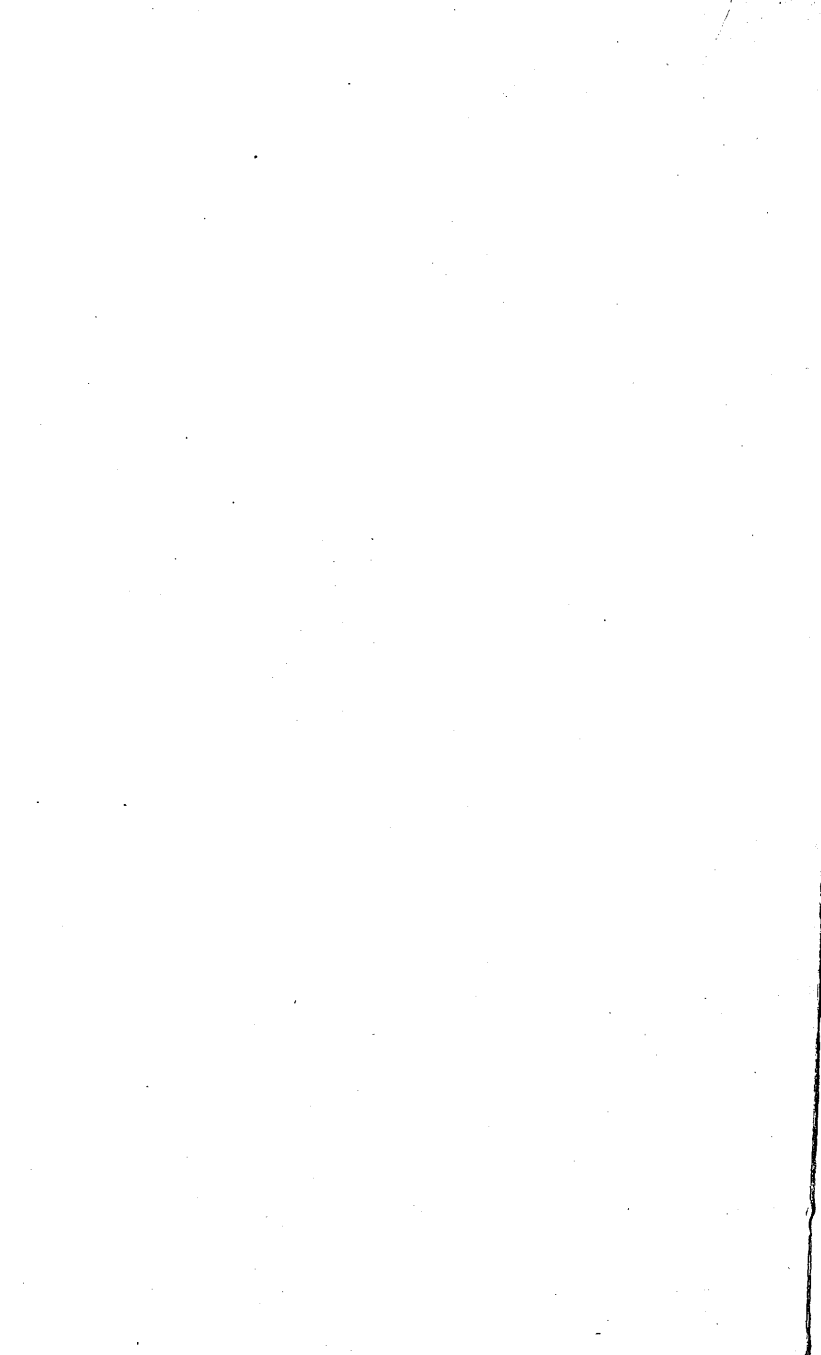
¹ These facts, of course, do not add weight to the evidence save so far as the consensus is also to some degree independent and not due merely to the use of Mark.

number at any rate of the miracles attributed to Jesus did not happen even as recorded.

Whether we may say more than this will depend on conclusions reached while regarding the whole subject from another point of view.

BOOK II

A Theory about the Alleged Facts



CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL IMPOSSIBILITY

SPEAKING of the alleged 'wonders' of the New Testament, Mr. J. M. Thompson says: 'Either these events are miracles, or they never happened.'¹ He means that if they happened they must have been miracles. It is not necessary for our purpose to discuss the truth of this assertion. It is enough to notice that Mr. Thompson believes that if these events happened as recorded they were miracles. By a miracle in this connexion he understands, 'a marvellous event occurring within human experience, which cannot have been brought about by human power, or by the operation of any natural agency. . . .'² We have already considered miracles as 'marvellous events occurring within human experience.' We have seen that the miracles of Jesus, taken at their face value, have not yet received scientific explanation; and also that some scientists maintain that it is highly probable that they never will be explained scientifically. But the view

¹ *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 207.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

of miracle taken by Mr. Thompson goes beyond even this. It maintains that if the alleged 'wonders' of the New Testament happened they were events 'which cannot have been brought about by human power or by the operation of any natural agency.' In a letter to the Lecturer Mr. Thompson explains further his meaning. He points out the difficulty of defining miracles; but he says: "Events which are neither the result of their ascertainable antecedents, nor the causes of their ascertainable consequents," might perhaps do; or better, "events which cannot be explained through their context." ¹

Many others adopt the same view, not only about the 'wonders,' but also about the majority of the marvellous acts, taken at their face value, attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. This is done by many who maintain the historicity of the events in question. Dr. T. B. Strong says: 'And here let me say in passing that it does not seem to me a satisfactory account of miracles—at any rate of some miracles of the Gospel—to say that they may be ultimately expressed in such terms as would satisfy the scientific ideal. There may be some cases of which this might be true. For instance, some of the cases of healing may really be explicable in the same fashion as faith healing in the present day. But for the majority of the Gospel miracles I cannot think that this method is adequate. They force us to declare whether we regard the stories as unhistorical

¹ December 2, 1912.

or whether we have some comprehensive view of the world into which we can fit them.' ¹

We find, then, a theory entertained concerning many of the alleged miracles of Jesus. It is believed that if they happened as recorded they must have been miracles in the special sense, that is to say, they were events 'which cannot be explained from the totality of intra-mundane factors.' ² It would have been well if we had two different terms to express these two views of miracles, namely, the view which regards them merely as alleged marvellous events not yet reduced to scientific law, and the view which regards them as events which are incapable of scientific explanation. But no satisfactory terms are to hand. Consequently we shall continue to use the term miracle. We desire to make it perfectly clear, however, that henceforth we shall use the term with the implication that the marvellous acts attributed to Jesus were 'acts for which the immanent causal nexus could not account (even if our knowledge were adequate).' ³

It is incumbent upon us to examine minutely this theory. Our conclusions concerning it may affect the impression made upon us by the evidence in support of the marvels attributed to Jesus.

We ought to ask in the first place, May it be said that miracles, in the sense now defined, are physically

¹ *Report of the Church Congress* (1912), p. 179.

² Wendland, *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 12.

³ Gore in *Report etc.*, p. 20.

impossible? The meaning of impossible we have already defined.¹ By a physical impossibility we understand any impossibility which is not due to moral considerations. The term physical is used by us, therefore, in a wide sense.

Huxley says: 'The definition of a miracle as a suspension or a contravention of the order of Nature is self-contradictory.'² It is to be noticed that we do not speak of 'a suspension or a contravention of the order of Nature.' But we should not shelter behind this fact, for Huxley's objection would, no doubt, be equally strong to the definition of a miracle as 'an event which cannot be explained from the totality of intramundane factors.'

But it is clear that what the definition given above of a miracle contradicts is the postulate of Science. Professor J. A. Thomson says: 'There is one fundamental postulate underlying scientific proceeding—a postulate which is verified with every fresh step. It is the postulate of the Uniformity of Nature. This, which may be analysed into a number of postulates, means that for our human purposes there is stability in the properties of things, that the same situations are continually recurring, that there is a routine in the order of Nature—a routine without gaps or interpolations, in which every event is determined by antecedent events.'³ The fundamental postulate of Science

¹ Book i., chapter i.

² *Hume*, p. 157.

³ *Introduction to Science*, pp. 78, 79.

then assumes the possibility of explaining every event from the totality of intramundane factors. Hence the definition of a miracle given above contradicts this postulate. As Wendland says: 'Science cannot operate with any such conception.'¹

Science as such, however, is not entitled to say that miracles are physically impossible. The Lecturer has consulted several scientific men on this point also, and they all speak again with one voice. Mr. J. Arthur Hill, who knows the mind of Sir Oliver Lodge intimately, says: 'You ask, Does Science maintain that it is antecedently impossible for a miracle—in the special sense—to happen? I think that a wise scientific man would say he neither maintains this nor denies it.'² And Dr. Trow puts the matter in a nutshell. In answer to the same question he says: 'Science *says* nothing.'

We may consider again the attitude of Logic towards our present problem. Dr. Bosanquet says: 'A "suspension of the laws of Nature," a "supernatural interposition" or "interference," is perhaps the one and only matter that, if alleged as a fact, can be denied on the sole evidence of the abstract "laws of thought."'³ It is to be noticed here again that the theory we are discussing does not speak of a 'suspension of the laws of Nature,' nor does it speak of 'interference.' But there is not the slightest doubt, we think, that Dr. Bosanquet would consider that his dictum was applic-

¹ *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 20. ² October 16, 1912.

³ October 18, 1912.

⁴ *Logic*, vol. ii, p. 215.

able to the conception of miracle which regards it as 'an event which cannot be explained from the totality of intramundane factors.' This conception, he would say, contradicts the 'abstract laws of thought.'

But miracle, as defined by us at present, only contradicts the 'abstract laws of thought' when regarded merely as postulates of scientific Knowledge. That this is the case is readily seen by an examination of Dr. Bosanquet's views. He defines Logic as the Morphology of Knowledge. But Knowledge, according to him, is attained when the specific and determinate conditions of things are fixed, or in other words, when their relevant natural conditions are determined. Knowledge, so defined, becomes possible on the assumption that Nature possesses a rational or systematic character. The validity of the assumption is that of the 'abstract laws of thought.' These are postulates without which Knowledge is impossible. Thus for Dr. Bosanquet the 'abstract laws of thought' are postulates of natural or scientific Knowledge. And the definition of miracle which we are considering merely contradicts the laws of thought regarded as such postulates.

But the fact that our conception of miracle contradicts the 'abstract laws of thought' regarded merely as the postulates of scientific Knowledge, does not *in itself* render miracles physically impossible. We admit that it is not easy to determine exactly what Dr. Bosanquet means in the passage quoted above. We

find it very difficult to believe that he thinks that miracles are physically impossible merely because they contradict the 'abstract laws of thought' regarded simply as the necessary assumptions of natural Knowledge.

At any rate, there are other writers on Material Logic who will not maintain on the sole ground of the laws of thought that miracles are physically impossible. In a letter written to the Lecturer several years ago Dr. Venn said: 'As to the general question of miracles I can only say, speaking for myself, that I have never felt any *logical* difficulty on the subject. What difficulties there are—and of course they are great, or there would be no significance in them, and no evidential value would ever have been attached to them—seem to me metaphysical, religious, moral, etc., rather than logical.'¹

If our definition of miracle violated a law of thought absolutely, some might argue perhaps that we had ground for regarding miracles as physically impossible.² And it would violate a law of thought absolutely, if Nature, conceived as including the feelings and actions of mankind, exhausted reality. 'An event which cannot be explained from the totality of intramundane factors,' if intramundane factors are supposed to exhaust reality, violates the law of Causation, which

¹ November, 1908.

² See Venn, *The Principles of Empirical or Inductive Logic*, 1889, p. 69.

Dr. Bosanquet regards as a sub-form of the law of Sufficient Reason.¹

But for an answer to the question whether Nature as defined above exhausts reality we must appeal to Philosophy. Let us ask then, Is Nature all ?

Many answer our question with an unhesitating affirmative. 'Yes,' they say, 'Nature is all. It is an all-comprehensive system.' Those who give this answer may be arranged in three classes.

(1) We have, first, those who start from the material side. The ultimate constituent of all things is matter—matter, that is to say, as known in the present, or as it will be known in the future, to the science of Physics. Out of matter all things, including life, even the life of man, in all its aspects, have been derived. Matter is all. This doctrine is known as Materialism.

It is not necessary for us to trace the history of Materialism from Democritus through Holbach down to Haeckel. All Materialists maintain, more or less consistently, that matter, with its properties, is sufficient to explain all things. And matter, let us

¹ *Logic*, vol. ii. pp. 212, 213. Leibnitz expresses the law of Sufficient Reason thus : 'Nos raisonnements sont fondés sur deux grands principes. . . . Et celui de la raison suffisante, en vertu duquel nous considérons qu'aucun fait ne saurait se trouver vrai ou existant, aucune énonciation véritable, sans qu'il y ait une raison suffisante, pourquoi il en soit ainsi et non pas autrement.' *La Monadologie*, §§ 31, 32. In *Œuvres Philosophiques de Leibnitz*, edited by Janet, vol. ii. p. 599.

repeat, is just what it means in Physics; whether on ultimate analysis it yields the atom, or electron, or anything else, makes no difference.

Thorough-going Materialism is well represented by the teaching of Holbach in *Système de la Nature* (1770). This teaching is summarized by Erdmann as follows: 'Nothing exists except matter and motion, which is inseparable from the nature of matter, and is therefore not something communicated to it. The sum of all things or of all that exists is called Nature, and forms a whole, since everything receives and communicates motion or stands in causal connexion. In Nature there is neither purpose, nor order, nor anything of the kind, but simply necessity. . . .'¹

Now, the Pythagoreans long ago said that the key that would open all the locks of Nature was Number. And it is perfectly true that much genuine science can be expressed in terms of number. Astronomy, Chemistry, Physics, and even the Biological Sciences, have their mathematical departments. It is also true that matter, in the form of brain, stands in close relation to the mind. 'Mind and brain advance and decline *pari passu*; the stimulants and narcotics

¹ *History of Philosophy*, vol. ii. pp. 166, 167. What remains of the writings of Democritus is found in Mullach's *Fragmenta Philosophorum Græcorum*, vol. ii. pp. 340-377. Haeckel's views are expounded in his *The Riddle of the Universe* (published by the Rationalist Press Association). See also on the subject of this paragraph Lange's *History of Materialism*.

that enliven or depress the action of the one tell in like manner upon the other. Local lesions that suspend or destroy, more or less completely, the functions of the centres of sight and speech, for instance, involve an equivalent loss, temporary or permanent, of words and ideas.'¹ Reducing Materialism, then, into a merely scientific doctrine, we allow that it contains much truth.

But, the doctrine is not free from objections even within the limits of mere science. No one has described better the defects of 'the mechanical theory, which aspires to resolve the actual world into an actual mechanism,' than Dr. Ward in his *Gifford Lectures* delivered before the University of Aberdeen. The whole of Part I of his work is devoted to this purpose, from the standpoint of Physics; and the Lecturer sums up his thorough investigation of the matter, by saying that 'the mechanical theory, as a professed explanation of the world, receives its death-blow from the progress of mechanical physics itself.'² Part II criticizes 'the mechanical theory' from the standpoint of Biology. And in Part III, dealing with 'psycho-physical parallelism,' the shortcomings of any theory which divests living beings of 'internal determinations and grounds of determination,' as even scientific Materialism does, are indicated.³

¹ Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, 3rd ed., vol. i. p. 10.

² *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, vol. i. p. 143.

³ See also, for a criticism of Materialism from the purely

It is, however, when we come to estimate the value of Materialism as a philosophy, as a supposed explanation of the totality of things, that its inadequacy becomes most apparent. The ultimate constituent of all things, we are told, is matter—matter in the sense in which Physics uses the term. But it is a truism to say that the only matter we know, or can know, is *known* matter. Huxley puts this point very clearly. ‘To sum up. If the materialist affirms that the universe and all its phenomena are resolvable into matter and motion, Berkeley replies, True; but what you call matter and motion are known to us only as forms of consciousness; their being is to be conceived or known; and the existence of a state of consciousness, apart from a thinking mind, is a contradiction in terms. I conceive that this reasoning is irrefragable. And, therefore, if I were obliged to choose between absolute materialism and absolute idealism, I should feel compelled to accept the latter alternative.’¹ Although, consequently, for purposes of the natural sciences, we are justified in abstracting the psychical side of things in order to confine attention to the material, no system of Philosophy, claiming to be an explanation of the totality of existence, can start from the purely material, for all material

scientific standpoint, Sir Oliver Lodge, *Life and Matter* and, especially on the biological side, Rudolf Otto, *Naturalism and Religion*.

¹ *Hume*, p. 279.

objects are known by us only as objects of consciousness.

Let us look at the question in another way. The standpoint of Materialism is objective ; it endeavours to explain everything from the point of view which we assume in studying, say, Physics. In Psychology, on the other hand, the standpoint is subjective. Now, Materialism cannot be an explanation of the totality of things unless it can explain the phenomena of mind from the objective point of view. But this is quite impossible. Even Tyndall admits this. 'Granted,' he says, 'that a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the intellectual organs, nor apparently any rudiment of the organs, which would enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from the one to the other.'¹

Feeling the force of these difficulties, certain Materialists give up the doctrine that everything can be produced out of pure matter, and they credit matter with originally possessing qualities which they at other times affirm to be derived from it by an evolutionary process. Haeckel, for example, says: 'We shall give to this material basis of all psychic activity, without which it is inconceivable, the provisional name of "psycho-

¹ *Fragments of Science*, 6th ed., vol. ii. p. 87. For a thorough examination of Materialism, see two pamphlets by Martineau, *Religion as affected by Modern Materialism*, and *Modern Materialism : its attitude towards Theology*.

plasm.”¹ Clifford, also, says that ‘mind-stuff is the reality which we perceive as matter.’² When materialistic writers resort to such things as ‘psychoplasm’ and ‘mind-stuff’ to prop up their views, they virtually acknowledge that thorough-going Materialism is indefensible.

The view, then, that matter is all, must be pronounced false. We have no knowledge of matter apart from mind. And, there is no passage from molecular action in the brain to the thought which accompanies it. We conclude, therefore, that there is no justification for asserting that Nature is all on the ground that matter is all. Matter is not all.

(2) Others attempt to prove that Nature is all, starting from the psychical side. Sensationalism, in any of its forms, we need not consider. True, it maintains that the ultimate factor of known reality is psychic in its character. But Sensationalism does not assert that Nature—having sensation as its ultimate constituent—is all. It only maintains that Nature is all that is known and knowable. Sensationalism has Agnosticism for a background. But there is a doctrine which contends that the individual Ego is all. This view goes by the name of Panegoism or Solipsism.

The following description will make clear what is meant by Panegoism. ‘The universe, the Panegoist argues, cannot be finally a universe of independent

¹ *The Riddle of the Universe* (R.P.A.), p. 32.

² *Lectures and Essays*, vol. ii. p. 85.

molecules; it is finally the independent Ego—with molecules, aggregates of molecules, and their qualities, all sustained in the conscious experience of the ego. Accordingly, one who looks upon the universe at the panegoistic point of view sees in the whole material world—stars, their planets, this planet with all its visible and tangible contents, including our own bodies—only inward experiences, proceeding in an established order which enables us to foresee other inward experiences still future—all which orderly universe within the mind would necessarily become extinct with the extinction of the percipient life of the ego, in which the whole is practically suspended. . . . My conscious life is the final supposition—not the starry heaven, with its molecular occupants, in the immensity of an independent space. Nothing now appears in the universe of existence but conscious mind; and the only mind of which I am conscious is my own.’¹

We know of no writer who holds consistently the above view as a philosophical system. In fact, the author of the description admits that it is somewhat imaginary. But, Panegoism as a tendency is traceable in several writers. Some authorities think that Fichte, during the early stage of his philosophical development, taught this doctrine.²

¹ A. C. Fraser, *Philosophy of Theism*, 2nd ed., amended, pp. 72, 73.

² See Erdmann, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 520, 521. The works of Fichte which should be consulted in this connection are :

As the Materialist, then, starts from matter, the Panegoist starts from himself, from his Ego. Out of this all things are produced. The present, past, and future of the world, for the Panegoist, are merely determinations of his own Ego. When he became conscious, the world came to be, and when he loses consciousness, it ceases to be. His Ego is all, it exhausts reality.

It is a question whether, starting from the Ego, we can satisfactorily solve the problem of either Psychology or Epistemology. Psychology, for instance, explains the processes whereby we 'become aware of a world of objects.'¹ Now, if by the Ego with which the Panegoist starts is meant merely the subject of consciousness, the question arises: How can we explain the emergence in consciousness of its objects, 'the starry heaven,' etc? If our starting-point is a bare subject, it seems to us that all consciousness is impossible. But, if the Panegoist admits that the Ego with which he starts already contains within itself, implicitly at least, both subject and object, independent of one another to the extent that neither can be derived from the other, his Ego must be either a mere name for the combination of subject and object—in which case we have not a monism but an un-

Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre (1794), *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* (ib.), and *Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen d. Wissenschaftslehre* (1795).

¹ Stout, *A Manual of Psychology*, p. 4.

explained psychical dualism ; or else the Ego is something over and above the combination mentioned—in which case a factor is introduced which is to account for the subject and object of the individual's consciousness.

Let us look at the matter from another point of view. The thorough-going Panegoist maintains, not only that he makes the world as it is for him, but also that there would be no world at all if he did not make it. This is not a question as to Knowledge merely, but as to Existence. And when we regard the matter from this standpoint, there seem to be serious objections to the panegoistic theory. For example, the Panegoist, we presume, would distinguish between memory of things which had happened in his own experience and belief in the events of past history. He may remember, for instance, having seen the late Queen Victoria twenty years ago, and he believes, on historical evidence, that Napoleon and Wellington fought at Waterloo in 1815. Both the memory and the belief involve, of course, a reference to his own consciousness. But yet, we presume the Panegoist would admit that there was here a difference also. Waterloo has a certain independence : would not the Panegoist admit this ? But if he does he has ceased to be a pure Panegoist. As Professor Campbell Fraser says : 'The solitary Ego, as the only datum, reduces human experience to absurdity, if not to contradiction.'¹

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

The conclusion to which we come, then, is that the argument which concludes that Nature is all because the individual Ego is all, is not valid. The individual Ego is not all.¹

(3) Others, again, might attempt to prove that Nature is all, starting from matter and mind as the only realities, and asserting that neither can be reduced into the other.

This thorough-going Dualism must be described at length. According to it, we have, on the one side, matter, the material world. This is the world studied by the so-called natural sciences. On the other side we have mind, the mental world. It consists of a centre, the Ego; ² of a circle of experiences, designated internal; and of a circle of external experiences. In these last the Ego becomes aware of the presence of the world of matter. These two worlds, the material and the mental, are, it is said, 'absolutely separate and mutually independent.' Besides these two, according to the Dualism we are describing, nothing exists. They, between them, exhaust reality.

The question naturally arises, How are these two worlds brought into relation to one another? That

¹ Pluralism, also, is defective and unsatisfactory. For an exhaustive criticism of the doctrine see Ward, *The Realm of Ends or Pluralism and Theism* (1911), Part I.

² By Ego is meant, of course, the finite Ego. Whether Dualism maintains the existence of only one Ego, or allows the existence of many, makes no difference for our criticism.

they are somehow brought into relation is evident, for the Ego has a consciousness of the material world. Provided the Dualism held is not the thorough-going doctrine described above, this question may be answered in various ways. Thus, we may, with Descartes, speak of an infinite substance, God, through Whom matter and mind are, indirectly, related; or, with Geulinx, we may teach a doctrine of Occasionalism, according to which God, as each occasion arises, brings matter and mind into relation with one another; or, once more, we may speak of a pre-established harmony between the material and the mental world, such as Leibnitz conceives to exist between the monads. But, if our Dualism is thorough-going, that is to say, if we assert that besides matter and mind nothing is, it is clear that we cannot fall back on any of the above solutions. The only view of the relation between mind and matter, consistent with thorough-going Dualism, is that implied in the doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism. We need not follow Professor Ward in his careful examination of this doctrine from the scientific point of view in Part III of his *Gifford Lectures* (Aberdeen Series).¹ It will suffice for our present purpose to ask, Does the theory of psycho-physical parallelism enable us to explain our consciousness of the world of matter? There can be only one answer to this question, and that a negative one. Indeed, psycho-physical parallelism renders the problem

¹ See also Otto, *op. cit.*, chapter xi.

of perception more difficult. If we were able to conceive of the mind as a kind of mirror in which the material world was directly reflected, we might persuade ourselves, perhaps, that we knew how we became conscious of our external world. But when the nervous system is interposed between the object and its mirror, the difficulty of the problem is enhanced. The moon in the mind might be said, by the Dualist, to be an exact copy of that in the firmament; but the moon in the brain is very different from either. The question, consequently, remains, How is the moon in the firmament related to that in the mind? Some forms of Dualism may shelter behind Agnosticism. But the Dualism we are considering cannot do this, since it maintains that besides matter and mind nothing is. For thorough-going Dualism, then, there is no explanation of external perception.

We have argued so far on the assumption that matter and mind are 'absolutely separate and mutually independent,' and have seen that if they are, and if they exhaust reality, the problem of perception is insoluble. Even the analogy of the mirror does not carry us far; ordinary mirrors are not conscious, and they contain no image *in* themselves. We must now, then, face the question whether there exists between matter and mind this absolute dualism. We have already seen, when discussing thorough-going Materialism, that we have no experience of matter apart from mind. What consciousness reveals on ultimate analysis is a

duality of subject and object. But subject and object as revealed in consciousness are not 'absolutely separate and mutually independent,' but, as Professor Ward puts it, are combined 'in the unity of experience.'¹ There are no such things, consequently, as matter and mind 'absolutely separate and mutually independent.' And hence the view which maintains that matter and mind, so conceived, exhaust reality, falls to the ground.

Whether we start, then, from pure matter, or from pure mind, or from the two existing side by side in absolute separation, we get no solution of epistemological and ontological problems. Consequently, we conclude that neither Materialism, nor Panegoism, nor Dualism, is able to prove that Nature is all. On the ground of none of these doctrines, therefore, can we say that miracles contradict the law of Sufficient Reason absolutely.

But it may be supposed that although Nature does not exhaust reality, still whatever exists in addition to it cannot exercise any control over its operations. This is the teaching of Pantheism. On this supposition again it may be shown that our definition of miracle violates the law of Sufficient Reason.

Pantheism exists in two forms. It is maintained on the one hand, that 'the All is God,' that is to say, the totality of existence constituting Nature, as defined above, is all that we mean by the term God. With

¹ *Op. cit.*, part iv. *passim*.

this form of Pantheism, it is clear that we have nothing to do here. For philosophically considered, it amounts to nothing but one or other of the systems already discussed—namely, Materialism, or Panegoism, or Dualism. The form of Pantheism with which we are now concerned is the one which maintains that ‘God is all.’ God is the only reality. All other things are but aspects of Him, having no real existence of their own.

This form of Pantheism is best represented by Spinoza, who has been called ‘the father of modern Pantheism.’ His teaching on God, and His relation to the universe, is found chiefly in the *Ethica Ordine Geometrica Demonstrata* and the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.¹

In our exposition of Spinoza’s Pantheism we may start from the two worlds of Dualism—the world of matter and that of mind. What these signify in ordinary experience, we all know. But nothing, in either world, says Spinoza, possesses independent existence. To the extent that we regard anything as possessing separate and independent reality, we are suffering from illusion, due to imagination. The phenomena of the material and the mental worlds have no real existence except in so far as they are ‘modes’ or ‘modifications’ of infinite extension and thought, respectively. When we think that in-

¹ The standard edition of the text of Spinoza’s works is that by Van Vloten and Land.

dividual persons and things are more than 'modifications,' the illusion is similar to that which takes place when we regard frozen waves as existing apart from the sea beneath.¹ Infinite extension and infinite thought are attributes of the One Infinite Substance, to wit God. They are not absolutely separate, as Matter and Mind are conceived to be in Dualism, seeing that they are only two aspects of the same thing. The Divine Being possesses an infinite number of attributes, but man has no knowledge of any except the two already mentioned. God is defined as 'a being absolutely infinite—that is, a substance consisting in infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality.'²

On this view Nature is not all. In fact it is nothing apart from God, who is the only Substance. But still, God and the world are only the two sides of the same thing—the *natura naturans* and the *natura naturata*. As cause, God is not transcendent but immanent. He always acts from the necessity of His nature. He never acts with a purpose: final causes are non-existent. He has no Will. All is mechanical action. 'Others think that God is a free cause, because he can, as they think, bring it about that those things, which we have said follow from his nature—that is which are in his power—should not come to pass, or

¹ For the metaphor see Erdmann, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 61, 62.

² *Ethics*, part i. def. 6. Elwes's trans. See *The Chief Works of Spinoza*, vol. ii. 3rd ed., p. 45.

should not be produced by him. But this is the same as if they said, that God could bring it about, that it should not follow from the nature of a triangle, that its three interior angles should ¹ be equal to two right angles, or that from a given cause no effect should follow, which is absurd. . . . Neither intellect nor will appertain to God's nature.' ²

Now, our criticism of Pantheism may be brief. The starting-point in all our philosophical speculations must be the facts of experience. In our experience nothing is more clear than the consciousness of selfhood, activity, spontaneity. This is something of which we cannot get rid, something which we cannot explain away ; but it is something of which Pantheism denies the reality. This system, therefore, contradicts the most fundamental conviction of our nature. It has been said that, if there is no spirit in the microcosm, there is no God in the macrocosm.³ We can say with equal truth, if there is no will in the microcosm, there is no Will in the macrocosm. But, on the other hand, if there is will in the microcosm, we have no right to say that there is no Will in the macrocosm. Further,

¹ The 'not' inserted after 'should' in the translation is clearly a misprint. Consequently we have omitted it. The Latin text reads: 'Sed hoc idem est, ac si dicerent, quod Deus potest efficere, ut ex natura trianguli non sequatur, ejus tres angulos æquales esse duobus rectis. . . .' (Bruder's ed.)

² *Ethics*, part i. prop. xvii., note. Elwes's trans.

³ Henry More.

according to Spinoza, the totality of existence is subject to mechanical law, and is calculable by its principles. But, reference has already been made to the shortcomings of the mechanical theory even in Physics; and, when it is attempted to apply it, as a thorough-going theory, in Biology, Psycho-physics, and Psychology, it fails egregiously. The defects of Pantheism in the sphere of Ethics and Religion, we need not, in our present connexion, consider. Pantheism is contradicted by experience; and, consequently, we cannot appeal to it in support of the view that miracles violate a law of thought absolutely.¹

We have discovered no ground then upon which it might be argued that miracles are physically impossible.

¹ For a fuller examination of Pantheism see Caird (E.), *Essays on Literature and Philosophy*; Caird (J.), *Spinoza* (Blackwood's Philosophical Classics), and *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*; Flint, *Anti-Theistic Theories*; Fraser, *Philosophy of Theism*; Iverach, *Descartes and Spinoza*, and *Pantheism* (*Expositor*, June to August, 1907); Land, Kuno Fischer, Van Vloten, and Renan, *Spinoza, Four Essays*; Martineau, *Study of Spinoza*, and *Types of Ethical Theory*; Pollock, *Spinoza*.

CHAPTER II

PHYSICAL POSSIBILITY

THE argument of the preceding chapter, however, does not justify the assertion that miracles are physically possible. The failure to prove impossibility cannot be taken as a disproof of it. Hence we now proceed to ask, Are miracles physically possible?

It is, once again, incumbent upon us to explain our terms. As we hold that a certain event A is impossible when there exists a certain condition B which is recognized as an insuperable obstacle to its occurrence;¹ so, we maintain that a certain event A is 'possible' when there exists something else, B, which is recognized as capable of bringing it about. By 'physical possibility' we mean possibility due to anything other than ethical considerations.

Is there, then, any justification for asserting that miracles are physically possible? Every system which affirms the existence of God, attributing to Him omnipotent Will, ought to answer this question in the

¹ See *supra*, book i., chapter i.

affirmative. And this possibility is affirmed by various systems.

(1) As an instance of such systems, we may refer, in the first place, to Deism.

An excellent description of so-called Dogmatic Deism is given by Pünjer. 'The term is now commonly applied to that view of the relation of God to the world which, in opposition to Atheism, affirms the existence of God, and in opposition to Pantheism, affirms the personal, independent, extra-mundane existence of God, but which at the same time, in opposition to Theism strictly so called, denies the continuous ever-present action of God upon the world and His activity in it. According to this deistic view, God called the world once for all into existence by His omnipotent creative word, but then left it to itself as the workman does with his finished work; and thus the world is supposed to proceed upon its course according to the laws of the *Causæ secundæ* that are immanent in it, without any interference on the part of the *Causa prima*.' ¹

The preceding account does not apply, at any rate without some qualification, to Historical Deism—by which, so far as England is concerned, we understand a movement of thought beginning with Lord Herbert of Cherbury and ending with Hume. ²

¹ *History of the Christian Philosophy of Religion*, p. 289. Cf. Bruce, *Apologetics*, pp. 115, 116.

² For a full discussion of Historical Deism see Cairns,

Now Deism, both Historical and Dogmatic, allows the physical possibility of miracles. We should scarcely expect an explicit statement of this admission. For, on the Deistic premises, their physical possibility is so clear that it hardly needs an explicit statement; and, besides, Deism is much more concerned with attempting to prove the moral impossibility of the miraculous, as we shall see later, than with admitting its physical possibility. And yet, the physical possibility of miracles is occasionally definitely granted by Deists. Peter Annet, for instance, the writer who has done most by way of attempting to prove their moral impossibility, allows that they are physically possible. 'If,' he says, 'God designed, at certain periods of duration, to mend His ordinary by an extraordinary work, to procure from man extraordinary faith and dependence on Him; it proves indeed they depend on *absolute Will* not on *absolute Wisdom*; that by His *common* laws He suffered man to become totally bad, that He might get honour by mending him, if possible, in an *uncommon* manner.'¹ It is not necessary for us to criticize the

Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century; A. S. Farrar, *The History of Free Thought in Religion*; Lechler, *Geschichte des Englischen Deismus*; Leland, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers*; M. Pattison, *Essay on The Tendency of Religious Thought in England from 1688-1750*, in *Essays and Reviews*; L. Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*.

¹ *Supernaturals Examined*, London, printed for F. Page, near St. Paul's, no date. The copy of *Supernaturals Examined* in our possession is part of a volume with the title, *A Collection of the Tracts of a certain Free Inquirer*, noted by

form of Annet's statement. It is sufficient to notice his admission that where absolute Will exists, miracles become physically possible. This possibility is admitted also, at least tacitly, by Dogmatic Deism.

(2) As a further instance of systems admitting the physical possibility of miracles, we may mention what we may call, without prejudice, Christian Theism. As an exponent of it, we may take Dr. W. N. Clarke.

Dr. Clarke deals, first, with what he calls the Christian Conception of God. The definition that is offered is the following: 'God is the personal Spirit, perfectly good, Who in holy love creates, sustains, and orders all.'¹ He gives a definition, also, of the Attributes of God. They 'are the modes of activity and the qualities of character that belong to Him as God.'² The attributes are divided into two classes, namely, the natural or physical, and the moral. We are concerned at present, of course, with the former only. The natural attributes of God are, Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence. 'By omnipresence we do not mean a presence of God that fills all space in the manner in which we think of matter as filling certain parts of space.'³ 'When we speak of God's omnipresence, we mean that God is not conditioned or limited by space in His power of acting, but is able

his Sufferings for his Opinions. The above quotation is taken from p. 129 of this *Collection*.

¹ *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 17th ed., p. 66.

² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

to put forth His entire power of action anywhere. The whole of His ability for action, of every kind, is available for exertion everywhere at any time, without any need that He move from place to place in order to reach the scene of action. Whatever God can do, whether by way of knowing, loving, creating, or controlling, He can do anywhere, and everywhere at once.' ¹ It is the emphasis placed by Christian Theism on Omnipresence that distinguishes it from Deism. Our author explains also what is meant by the Omnipotence of God: 'The doctrine of omnipresence teaches that God is everywhere present with His full power of action; the doctrine of omnipotence tells how wide a range of possibility is covered by His power. The name denotes the possession of all power, and attributes to God unlimited possibilities. Omnipotence may be defined as the perfect ability of God to do all things that His nature or His character can suggest.'² 'Immutability,' Dr. Clarke adds, 'is a characteristic of God that must be mentioned. God is unchangeable in Himself, and in the essential modes of His activity. He is always a personal spirit with the same elements of nature; He is always the same in character; and He always acts in essentially the same modes. This must be true of a perfect Being. But immutability must not be conceived as immobility, fixedness, rigidity. It is not inability to act variously in various conditions. The unchangeable God holds an unchangeable purpose,

¹ *Ibid.*² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

but steadiness of purpose requires variety in execution. Just for the reason that God is the unchangeable One, steadily working out the purpose that expresses His real self, He must act in a thousand ways, varying His action with the occasion for action, while He Himself changes never. The inexhaustible versatility of the divine mind is the true expression of its changelessness.¹

The relation of God to the Universe is, also, explained by Dr. Clarke. 'God is the Source of the Universe. Whether by immediate production at some point of time, so that after He had existed alone there came by His act to be a universe, or by perpetual production from His own spiritual being, so that His eternal existence was always accompanied by a universe in some stage of being, God has brought the universe into existence. Whatever the method, it has no independent existence apart from Him, its source.'² 'God is a Free Spirit, greater than the Universe. God dwells in the universe, and is active in the whole of it, but is not to be conceived as wholly occupied by it, or exhausting His possibilities in conducting its processes.'³ 'This statement affirms both the immanence and the transcendence of God. By the immanence of God is meant that He is everywhere and always present in the universe, nowhere absent from it, never separated from its life. By His transcendence is meant, not (as is sometimes represented) that He is outside and views

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 129.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

the universe from beyond and above, but that He is not shut up in it, not limited by it, not required in His totality to maintain and order it.' ¹ Again, 'God has uniform method in conducting the universe. Uniform method is named law.' ² 'In general, God's method in the universe is evolutionary.' ³

In the light of the preceding statements, it is easy to imagine Dr. Clarke's view as to miracles. 'If God is a free Spirit above all, He must constantly be carrying on processes and performing acts that do not belong to the order with which we in this world are familiar. When such action appears in this world, it is commonly called supernatural; and "the supernatural" is the name that is given to the activity and work of God apart from the order that we are familiar with under the name of Nature.' ⁴ And further, 'the name "miracles" has been given to special acts of God departing from the ordinary method, performed in the sight of men for a moral purpose. Whether miracles have been wrought, whether some given event is a miracle, are questions for evidence; but the possibility of such acts cannot be denied, except by Atheism, or by Pantheism that makes God unfree. If God is a free Spirit, immanent and transcendent, not limited to what He is doing, miracles are possible, and may occur on sufficient occasion.' ⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 134.

The conclusion, then, to which we come is, that miracles become physically possible on the assumption that there is a Supreme Being such as both Deism and Christian Theism posit—a Free Spirit with an omnipotent Will.

CHAPTER III

MORAL IMPOSSIBILITY. MORAL POSSIBILITY

THE conclusion of the preceding chapter, however, does not justify the assertion that miracles are entirely possible. For they may still be regarded as morally impossible. In fact there are thinkers who admit the physical possibility of the miraculous but who maintain at the same time its moral impossibility.

By moral impossibility is meant an impossibility due to purely moral considerations. It is physically possible for a certain man to lay his hand on the property of another; but such an act may be morally impossible for him. His moral character may be such that it will always stand in the way of the act being performed.

Now, certain writers apply this line of argument to God in connexion with miracles. It is physically possible for Him, they say, to perform them, or to cause them to be performed; but what is physically possible is morally impossible.

Such is the attitude of Deism. We can get no better representative of it than Peter Annet, a writer

to whom we have already had occasion to refer. Peter Annet was, as we have seen, a 'free inquirer noted for his sufferings for his opinions.' He died in 1768. We have noticed that he admits the physical possibility of miracles.¹ But he contends, without any equivocation, that morally they are impossible. He says, 'My next intention is to show, that to *change the course of Nature, is inconsistent with the Attributes of God.*'² Again, 'God has *settled* the laws of Nature by His *wisdom* and *power*, and therefore cannot alter them consistent with His perfections: This is demonstrative proof of the impossibility of miracles *a priori*; and if the *effects* change, so must the *cause*: if the *laws* alter, so must the *Lawgiver*. This proves the same *a posteriori.*'³ And further, 'To suppose that God can alter the settled laws of Nature, which Himself formed, is to suppose His *will* and *wisdom* *mutable*; and that they are not the *best laws* of the *most perfect Being*; for if He is the Author of them, they must be as immutable as He is; so that He cannot alter them to make them *better*, and will not alter them to make them worse. Neither of these can be agreeable to His Attributes. If the course of Nature is not the *best*, the *only best*, and *fittest* that could be; it is not the offspring of *perfect Wisdom*, nor was it settled by *Divine Will*; and then God is not the Author of Nature, if the laws thereof can be altered. For if the laws of Nature

¹ *Supra*, the preceding chapter.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

are God's laws, He cannot alter them in *any degree*, without being in *some degree* changeable. If all Nature is under the direction of an immutable Mind, what can make a change in that direction? God must be allowed to be eternal, therefore, He necessarily exists, and is necessarily whatever He is; therefore it is not in His own power to change Himself; it is His perfection to be immutable; for if His nature could possibly change, it might err; for whatever is changeable is not perfect. Besides, an *eternal* and a *perfect Nature* must necessarily be unchangeable. And as long as the first moving cause is the same, all subsequent and second causes can never vary.' ¹

A very similar view is advocated by the author of *Supernatural Religion*. 'Being, therefore, limited to reason for any feeble conception of the Divine Being of which we may be capable, and reason being totally opposed to the idea of an order of Nature so imperfect as to require or permit repeated interference, and rejecting the supposition of arbitrary suspensions of law, such a conception of the Deity as is proposed by theologians must be pronounced irrational and derogatory to the wisdom and perfection which we must recognize in the invariable order of Nature. It is impossible for us to conceive the Supreme Being acting otherwise than we actually see in Nature, and if we recognize in the universe the operations of His infinite

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

wisdom and power, it is in the immutable order and regularity of all phenomena, and in the eternal prevalence of law, that we see their highest manifestation.' ¹

The argument seems to be expressed in two forms. (1) God is perfectly wise, therefore He will design the very best world possible. He is possessed of all power, therefore He will be capable of carrying out His design in all its details. Consequently, if we should say that God at any time tampered with the world by interfering with its laws, we impugn His wisdom and power. (2) God is immutable. But, if He interferes with the laws of Nature, He becomes mutable, which is impossible.

It is necessary to say that it will avail us nothing to criticize the form in which the above objections are put. Laws of Nature are regarded as 'settled'; and miracles are conceived as acts of 'interference,' of 'arbitrary suspensions of law.' But laws of Nature are not so regarded by science to-day. And the theory of miracles which we are considering does not speak of interference or of arbitrary suspensions. Still these facts do not remove the objections. Several writers feel that the Deistic argument, as to its essence, is valid even against the view of miracle which regards it merely as an event which cannot be explained from the totality of intramundane factors.

¹ *Op. cit.*, 4th ed., vol. i. p. 75.

Let us examine the argument in its two forms. And in considering the first form it will be well for us to take its various steps separately.

‘God is perfectly wise, therefore He will design the very best world possible.’ To make our position perfectly clear, it is necessary to state that we are not concerned with attempting to establish the existence of God, Creator of all things. Our problem is : Accepting, for the sake of argument, the premises of Deism, are its conclusions valid ? We shall assume, then, that there is a God, who is possessed of all wisdom, as Deism maintains. From this premise the inference is drawn, that ‘He will design the very best world possible.’ It is not necessary for our purpose to consider why He should design a world at all. We will take for granted that such would be the case. Does it follow from the wisdom of God that He would design ‘the very best world possible’ ? Certainly. A wise person will do things in a wise way. And an All-wise Person will be certain to do all things in a wise, in the best, way.

Again, ‘He is possessed of all power, therefore He will be capable of carrying out His design in all its details.’ It is not necessary to emphasize the fact that God cannot do what is contradictory or immoral. For Deism would assert that these cannot be designed by Him. But it is necessary to call attention to the fact that God can design the existence of free beings like Himself. And some of the Deists believed that

God had endowed man with 'free agency.'¹ Should any of the Deists deny this, we should have to join issue with them on one of their premises.² But if God brings into existence a being possessed of free agency like Himself, His ability to carry out His design with respect to the world will depend to some extent, for a time at any rate, on this being. If God creates man free, He cannot apply physical coercion to him without undoing His creation. It is necessary to enter this *caveat* with respect to the inference drawn by Deism from the omnipotence of God.

Further, Deism maintains that 'should we say that God at any time tampered with the world by interfering with its laws, we impugn His wisdom and power.' Our answer is that it is not proved that there is anything in the conception of miracle which necessarily implies a reflection on the Divine wisdom. But we must be careful to do justice to Deism. Its argument is that God is so wise that He will design the world in such a way that it will not be necessary to tamper with it at any time. And as He is possessed of all power He will be able to execute His design. Annet says: 'If God ever determined for moral ends and reasons to interpose, if needful, by a different method than that of His standard laws; it must be either because He could not foresee the *consequences*,

¹ See Leland, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers*, ed. 1837, p. 615.

² See *supra*, our criticism of Spinoza.

which is like blundering in the dark; or He foresaw it would be needful; and then it looks like a blunder in the design, and contrivance; or He foreknew and determined His *own works* should not answer His *own ends*, without His mending work, which is worst of all. That God, either *with or without design*, let men alone to go on in their old way, 'till they were ruined, and could not recover themselves, nor He them, without extraordinary interposition of supernatural power, is a supposition injurious to the Attributes of the Deity.' ¹ The defect of this line of argument is that it assumes the very point to be proved. Provided all the functions of the world can be fulfilled by an absolutely uniform system, it would, of course, be a reflection on the wisdom and power of its Maker, should there be any need of deviating from it. But until it is proved that they can, we have no right to say that there is anything in the mere idea of miracle which necessarily contradicts the Divine Attributes.

Paul Sabatier argues that miracles are morally impossible because they involve a reflection on the impartiality of God. He says: 'If by miracle we understand either the suspension or subversion of the laws of Nature, or the intervention of the first cause in certain particular cases, I could not concede it. In this negation 'physical and logical reasons are secondary; the true reason—let no one be surprised—is entirely religious; the miracle is immoral. The equality of

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

all before God is one of the postulates of the religious consciousness, and the miracle, that good pleasure of God, only degrades Him to the level of the capricious tyrants of the earth.' ¹ We assume that Sabatier's conclusion would have been the same if the hypothetical clause in the first sentence had read, 'if by miracle we understand an event which cannot be explained from the totality of intramundane factors.' But we fail to see that the mere conception of miracle is *ipso facto* a reflection on the Divine Impartiality. Privileges may be conferred on individuals not with a view to their own benefit merely, but with a view also to the benefit of the community of which they are members. There is nothing in the mere conception of miracle which implies capriciousness.

It may be well for us at this point to give further consideration to Dr. Bosanquet's position. With very great kindness, he discussed the subject at considerable length with the Lecturer. He says: 'God's general revelation of His mode of action in Nature and man has rendered it impossible for a conflicting mode of operation to be substituted at any given point. To recognize the possibility of it would be to destroy the whole. Our only access to Knowledge would be blocked.' ² And again: 'But if you say God suspended the laws of Nature, then you say, He deprived Himself of His only means of appealing to our intelligence,

¹ *Life of St. Francis*, p. 433.

² Letter, September 12, 1912.

and the conditions of knowing being violated, we can only profess ignorance.'¹ Dr. Bosanquet's objection would apply, no doubt, to any definition of miracle which regarded it as an event incapable of scientific explanation. His position, as we understand it, is that to suppose that God alters the nature of a thing, except in consistency with the rational system of which it is an element, is to make Him contradict Himself or act against reason. The question is, Does the conception of miracle in the strict sense involve a contradiction of the rationality of God? It is no part of the idea of miracles that they should be wrought arbitrarily or capriciously. If miracles have happened, then events have happened which are not capable of scientific explanation, for that is what miracles are defined to be. But it remains to be proved that in working miracles God would be contradicting Himself. As Professor Campbell Fraser argues: '*Must* all events that happen be physically conditioned? Do physical events in all cases need to have causes in the material world, as the indispensable condition of their occurrence? Is the constant miracle of the universe in its natural uniformities the only possible miracle? Is it the only divine revelation that is reasonable? Whether the constant miracle, by which the world is kept in its providential order, when measured only by the visible issues, is or is not greater than the arrest of the sun or

¹ Letter, October 23, 1912. Cf. Spinoza, *Chief Works of Spinoza* (Elwes), vol. i. pp. 82; 84, 85.

moon, or than the resurrection of a person who was dead—may there not be room, under a more comprehensive Divine Science than that exemplified in material sequence, for an *occasional* occurrence of events that are *not* the outcome of divine action conducted under conditions of natural law, but in which the Universal Power is unconditioned by, while in harmony with, operation and change according to physical law? The divine maintenance of outward nature may involve greater power than any occasional miracle. Notwithstanding, in a universe charged throughout with Adaptation, in which every event is not only connected under natural law with every other, but in which every event is a means to what appears to man as a designed end, and the whole as designed by Perfect Goodness to make persons good, including those who have made themselves bad—in our conception of a universe thus teleologically constituted, are we at liberty, with our weak intelligence and narrow experience, to assume dogmatically that physically conditioned activity of the Universal Power is the *only* sort of divine activity that is reasonable, or adapted to the whole? May there not be divine design in occasional miracles that appear, to man at least, to be independent of all natural causes, if not of rational order?’¹ Dr. Campbell Fraser says further: ‘Probably man’s teleological conception of the universe is not adequate to determine whether physical events

¹ *Philosophy of Theism*, p. 300.

can make their appearance independently of physical laws, through the agency of the power that *also* operates, as it seems normally, according to physical methods. If this be so, it seems to follow that the impossibility of a "miraculous" assimilation of the Natural Law of divine activity by the higher Law of Adaptation cannot be proved, and that any alleged instance of what looks like a miracle of this sort is open to the tests of experience and historical criticism.¹ And, to look at the matter from the opposite point of view, it is a matter of experience that to believe in the reality of miracles is not detrimental to the spirit of scientific investigation.

We may now proceed to the second form of the Deistic argument in support of the moral impossibility of the miraculous. 'God is immutable. But if He interferes with the laws of Nature, He becomes mutable, which is impossible.' Deism asserts that God is 'immutable.' At the same time it ascribes to Him omnipotent Will. Now, if God possesses a Will, His 'immutability' cannot mean absolute inactivity. For it is of the very nature of will to be active. And Deism admits that Will is an eternal Attribute of God. But it contends, on moral grounds, that the activity of God is constant and unvarying. Physical immutability is inferred from moral immutability. Further, 'if He interferes with the laws of Nature, He becomes

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 300, 301. Cf. Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, p. 110.

mutable, which is impossible.' We must allow that the occurrence of an event which was not explicable by the totality of intramundane factors would imply a change, for the time being, in God's usual mode of action ; but, it need not imply a change in His motives. There is no necessary inconsistency between physical mutability and moral immutability. Therefore, physical immutability is not an absolutely necessary implicate of moral immutability.

The conclusion to which we come from a study of the Deistical argument in both of its forms is, consequently, that it is not proved that there is anything in the conception of miracles which is *ipso facto* inconsistent with the Attributes ascribed to God. Hence, we hold that Deism fails to prove their moral impossibility.

But, can we go further ? Is there any justification for asserting the moral possibility of the miraculous ? Can we point to anything in the conception of miracle which is consistent with the Attributes of God ?

We may now complete the definition of miracle adopted by Mr. J. M. Thompson. ' A miracle may be defined as " A marvellous event occurring within human experience, which cannot have been brought about by human power, or by the operation of any natural agency, and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity, or of some supernatural being ; chiefly, an act (*e.g.* of healing) exhibiting control over the laws of Nature, and serving as evidence that the agent is either divine or is specially favoured

by God.”’¹ And Dr. Clarke, as we have seen, says : ‘The name “miracles” has been given to special acts of God departing from the ordinary method, performed in the sight of men for a moral purpose.’²

Our question is, Are miracles consistent with the moral character attributed to God ? Christian Theism answers this question in the affirmative. We may take Dr. W. N. Clarke, again, as its exponent. The attributes of God are divided, as we have seen, into the natural and the moral. The moral Attributes are, according to Dr. Clarke, Holiness and Love. The latter is defined as follows : ‘Love is God’s desire to impart Himself and all good to other beings, and to possess them for His own in spiritual fellowship.’³ The Will of God, consequently, is moved by His Love. And the function ascribed above to miracles is perfectly consistent with the Love of God.

Christian Theism, then, asserts the possibility, moral as well as physical, of the miraculous. Dr. Clarke says, ‘Miracles are possible and may occur on sufficient occasion.’⁴ Whether a ‘sufficient occasion’ is actually to be found will be considered when we discuss ‘Antecedent Probability.’

¹ *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 1.

² See the preceding chapter.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 95.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

CHAPTER IV

ANTECEDENT PROBABILITY

WE come to consider the probability of the miraculous. And it is very essential for us to explain what our present problem precisely is. We are going to discuss not what amount of probability there is that miracles have happened, but what probability, if any, we can say there was that they would be performed. Our subject then is antecedent probability.

It is essential for us, further, to distinguish between the question relating to the antecedent probability of the miraculous and that relating to its possibility. We can do this best, perhaps, by endeavouring to distinguish between the two conceptions in connexion with a homely incident. A certain man has a son, who will be fifteen on his next birthday, and the question is whether his father will present him with a bicycle on that occasion or not. Is it possible that he will do so? And, again, is it probable? We may answer the first question in the affirmative. It is physically possible for the father to buy the bicycle.

He has sufficient means, and there is a shop close at hand where machines suitable for boys are sold. The father has, in addition, the physical ability to perform the act of will necessary to make the purchase. Further, the presentation we are considering is morally possible. For the father feels great affection for his child. There exists, consequently, the motive which might impel him to make the gift. But is it probable that he will do so? In answering this question we must look at the matter from the standpoint of the youth. Assuming that he desires a bicycle, and that he has expressed his desire to his father, and assuming also that the doctor has recommended the father to see that his child gets more open air recreation, it becomes a matter of probability that the machine will be bought.

Of course, the fact that we feel the need of the category of probability is a witness to our ignorance. If we knew all, we should not require it. If we knew, for example, the character of the father mentioned in the preceding paragraph, through and through, and if we knew all the external circumstances which would affect his decision, it would not be necessary to speak of probability at all; we could say either that we were certain the father would buy the bicycle or that we were certain he would not.

Let us now proceed to consider the question of antecedent probability in relation to miracles. In dealing with this subject we have to take into account ultim-

ately special circumstances of time and place. Dr. Clarke says, 'Miracles are possible, and *may* occur on sufficient occasion.'¹ We ask then, Can we point to any considerations which justify the assertion that it was probable that miracles would be performed at any time ?

Miracles are suitable for emphasizing the existence and character of God. A father's affection for his child is shown by the permanent provision he makes for him. He makes arrangements by which the child is taken care of and is provided with all the necessities and comforts of life. These do not change : they are standing orders, so to speak. But these general arrangements do not prevent the father, occasionally, breaking through the uniformities of the household by adopting unusual means for manifesting his paternal love. Indeed there may be particular circumstances in the life of the child which makes it probable that his father will manifest his favour in an especial manner.²

The question is, Can we point to anything which made it probable that God would perform miracles in man's interest, or which even makes it probable that He will perform them ?

It is maintained that the conception of Revelation involves the miraculous. Wendland says : 'Every Divine revelation and all communion of man with God, as of God with man, is a miracle ; inasmuch as

¹ See *supra*, book ii., chapters ii. and iii.

² Cf. Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, p. 110.

what is then asserted is a living intrusion of God in the human world. Our definitions of miracle suit these instances exactly. Divine revelation does not arise from the intramundane causal nexus ; it is in no way derivable from known laws. It is not indicated by the given condition of the universe.' ¹

Again, the conception of Providence is supposed to imply miracle. 'Divine providence,' says Wendland, 'has unquestionably the character of miracle, in the sense that it implies what is amazing and inscrutable.' ² Dr. H. R. Mackintosh also says : 'Now I wish to put the question whether it is possible to hold that God really governs the universe, except by implicitly assuming what is tantamount to miracle. . . . But can He govern it except as He affects its course of movement, and affects it by way of real initiation ? Can He govern it at all unless He interposes creatively, as a *vera causa* ? I find it difficult to understand what significance we are to attach to the providence of God, in which every Christian believes, if He is to be regarded simply as contemplating the cosmic processes at every point, and letting them have their own way. There is no answer, as it seems to me, to Lotze's words : "One who regards the world as a system of causes and effects in which there are no free beginnings, has no right to speak of it as being governed at all."

¹ *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 125.

² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Now a miracle is nothing more or less than a free beginning on God's part.' ¹

Further, it is held by many that faith in the hearing of Prayer implies belief in the miraculous. Wendland says: 'Ultimately the aim of every prayer is simply to change the course of the world.' ² And Dr. Mackintosh says: 'The man who prays, therefore, instinctively and of necessity holds to the real nature of fellowship with God. He is conscious that the Divine mind and his own are in a real relationship of reciprocal activity. Now the point to note is that such fellowship is essentially a supernatural thing. It is something that simply breaks through the mechanical theory according to which the universe is a closed system of necessary causation, admitting of no free intervention from within or without. It means that God is entering into personal converse with man, and that man is answering back again. This, from the point of view of a world completely "given," and so, as Laplace put it, capable of deduction from its formula, is as miraculous a fact as we could wish.' ³

Finally, in this connexion, Wendland asks, 'Is the idea of miracle applicable to those facts which play the supreme part in Christian faith and life—the fact that men are transfigured by the Divine redeeming action; the fact that sinners are converted and find

¹ *Expositor*, May, 1910, p. 426.

² *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 191.

³ *Expositor*, May, 1910, p. 424.

forgiveness, and that in consequence their life becomes wholly changed ? ' ¹ He answers the question in the affirmative. ² Dr. Mackintosh is of precisely the same opinion. Speaking of the forgiveness of sin, he says : ' Now this, I repeat, is in the strict sense miraculous. It is something to which the normal operations of phenomenal reality are simply irrelevant ; something which transcends all their relations of inviolable sequence, just because it is God Himself entering a human life in an immediate (yet not unmediated) way, and inaugurating a new relationship in which He and that life shall henceforth stand to each other.' ³

We are not now arguing that God has revealed Himself in an immediate way to man, that He governs the world, answers prayer, and saves sinners. Our point is simply that the conception in each case involves the miraculous. And our problem is : Does any degree of antecedent probability attach to the conception ?

On the basis of Christian Theism the question is generally answered in the affirmative.

Dr. Clarke, for example, maintains that the antecedent probability of Revelation is so great as to amount to certainty. He says : ' Not only the doctrine of a faithful Creator, but the practical effect of it, has been truly stated by Christians from of old. It has been said

¹ *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 153.

² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

³ *Expositor*, May, 1910, p. 431.

for ages in Christian Apologetics that a good God, if He exists, will certainly communicate with His human creatures in the realm of their spiritual life. He will not be a God apart, He will reveal Himself. So He will. Nothing can be more certain. That is the shortest of inferences from His goodness. That the good God will be to men a communicating God is as surely true as anything that we can say of Him. Our assurance of this is enhanced by what the Christian doctrine affirms concerning the likeness between God and man. Man was created in the image of God. The two are not aliens to each other, and the community is in the very nature. God is a Spirit, and so is man, and therefore "Spirit with Spirit can meet." Man is created receptive of God, capable of communion with Him, and of entertaining Him, so to speak, as the guest of the soul.' ¹

With regard to Providence the same writer says: 'Although we refuse to define providence as a divine occasionalism breaking through a regular order, we meet the question whether it consists exclusively in God's operation in the natural order of the world. Is this all? or does providence involve the working of a higher order also, congenial to God, which now and then appears amidst the operations of the method that is familiar to us? Does providence include supernatural occurrences as well as natural? We

¹ *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 144, 145. See also *ibid.*, pp. 463, 464.

meet this question in the conviction that in providence we contemplate a God too great to be fully expressed in the natural order of this world as we understand that order. There is more in Him than nature can express, and it may well be that He desires to manifest more of Himself than can thus be represented. Works transcending this world's order would be incredible if nature were the whole, but there is an outreaching and communicating God, for whose fullness nature offers only an inadequate language. Since there is such a God, it is in harmony with reason that His creatures may now and then hear among them a voice that is not of this world. If we think of God as limited by any necessity to His actual method, we shall not be thinking of Him as really God. We call man a free agent, but much more a free agent is He from whom the type of man's freedom came.' ¹

With the subject of Providence that of Prayer is closely associated. In relation to it Dr. Clarke says : 'The main function of prayer lies in the region of fellowship with God, and here, in the freedom of a father with his children, we may be sure that God will frequently fulfil the desires of those who pray. In the realm of natural occurrences, direct intervention in answer to prayer . . . will not be frequent enough to destroy the general order.' ²

As we have already seen it is claimed that in Re-

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 203, 204.

² *Outlines of Christian Theology*, p. 134.

demption also God works by means of acts which are not explicable through the totality of intramundane factors. The question which we have to ask is, whether Redemption so conceived is antecedently probable. Dr. Clarke replies in the affirmative. In view of sin it is not only antecedently probable but morally necessary that God should interpose to save, for He is 'at heart a Saviour.'¹

But some may minimize the evil of sin, and take a perfectly optimistic view of the world as it is. This is just what is done by Peter Annet. 'If God,' he says, 'did not like to see the world as it is, He could not have made it as it is.'² Again, 'Man's Evil is not absolute Evil; it is not Evil to God, but indifferent respecting Him; what reason is there then, for His interposing or mending? For, *in this light*, Things are as God designed them, therefore 'tis not fit that God, as a *moral Governor*, should interpose His Power to remedy what He thought fit to do, or to enable man to do, which is all one; for all Man's Power is from his Maker.'³ And further, 'If Man *abused* the Power God *gave* him, nothing can better mend the matter than to *take it away* again; since God foresaw the bad Effects, it had been better to give it with a more sparing Hand; to have been *less generous* would have been *more merciful*.'⁴ It is said in reply that this is

¹ See *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 212 ff.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁴ *Ibid.*

not the view of sin involved in Christian Theism. Dr. Clarke says: 'The Christian doctrine is that all sin is sin against God.' ¹

In view of the preceding discussion it may fairly be said that, on the assumption that the fundamental postulates of Christian Theism are valid, miracles—spiritual or material—possess some degree at least of antecedent probability. As Dr. Campbell Fraser says: 'The existence of persons may require in reason an unfolding of a larger divine Adaptation than appears in physical causation measured only by human science. It seems consistent with reason that the physical method should not be the highest form in which Omnipotent Goodness is revealed even in the material world; and also that, in the final rationale of the universe, the order of external nature should have a subordinate place, in a harmony of the whole which may exceed man's speculative imagination.' ²

But in connexion with Revelation, Providence, Prayer, and Redemption the miracle is supposed to be wrought by God directly. The question has now to be asked whether there is any antecedent probability that God works miracles—in the material world—through the instrumentality of others; for the miracles which form the subject of our special study in this

¹ *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 185.

² *Philosophy of Theism*, p. 302.

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Lecture are of this character: they are alleged to have been wrought by Jesus.

Christian Theism is regarded as justifying an affirmative answer to this question also.

It maintains, for one thing, that in the Divine government of the world the material order of things is subservient to the spiritual. 'A spirit,' says Dr. Clarke, 'who could give existence to such a universe, could not do it without an all-comprehensive purpose.'¹ Again, 'Since God is a Spirit, this final end must be spiritual. The material enfolding and unfolding, rising and falling, flux and reflux, in which the universe fulfils its course, cannot be enough to command the deepest interest of God the Spirit. The lower forms of life cannot suffice Him, nor can mere intellectual operation satisfy Him. The universe contains spiritual beings innumerable, of whom men are the part known to us; and this part of existence, being directly akin to God, is the dominant and characteristic part, in which the significance of the entire system must be found. Since the lower serves the higher, the universe must exist for the spirits that it contains, and for the highest that is in them; and the "one far-off divine event" must be spiritual. In the goodness of God we find an additional assurance of this; for a good Creator will surely take interest chiefly in the highest nature and destiny of His creatures, and these are spiritual. The Highest cares for the highest.'²

¹ *Outline of Christian Theology*, pp. 134, 135. ² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

In view of this, Christian Theism maintains further that, if any person emerged during the course of history who was in some way the direct personal representative of God in the world, it would be antecedently probable that God would work miracles—even in the realm of matter—through him. This aspect of the subject will be developed further when we come to consider the claims made on behalf of Jesus and his mission.¹

It is not necessary for our present purpose to consider whether such a Being as Christian Theism posits really exists. It is sufficient to have indicated the conditions under which miracles become physically and morally possible, and also antecedently probable.

¹ *Infra*, Conclusion.

CHAPTER V

EVIDENCE : IMPOSSIBILITY

IT is incumbent upon us to consider now whether it may be said that it is impossible to obtain evidence sufficiently strong to accredit a miracle regarded as 'an event which cannot be explained from the totality of intramundane factors.' We have seen that no historian maintains that it is impossible to obtain sufficient evidence to accredit any event regarded merely as such, however extraordinary it may be.¹ But our present question is a totally different one. Is it impossible to obtain evidence strong enough to accredit a miracle as defined above ?

We must make it quite clear that we cannot know—in the scientific sense of the term—that any event is a miracle. An event is known scientifically when its determinate natural conditions are fixed. But *ex hypothesi* a miracle cannot be explained from the totality of natural conditions. Dr. Bosanquet is perfectly right on this point. He says : 'But the allegation that something is known and yet not know-

¹ Book i., chapter i.

able, nay more known *as* not knowable and in respect of the peculiar essence which makes it not knowable—this, if we would retain our sanity, we must refuse to entertain as conceivable.’¹ Dr. Campbell Fraser also says : ‘ But if occasional miraculous events may be destitute of physical causes, their miraculousness cannot be tested by the inductive methods which lead up to the discovery of physical causes : for, *ex hypothesi*, there is no physical cause of a miracle to be discovered.’² Dr. Mozley is equally explicit. He says : ‘ The supernatural cause of a fact is a truth which in its own nature cannot be reached by ocular evidence or attestation.’³

But it may be believed that if a certain event happened it must have been a miracle. We have seen that Mr. J. M. Thompson, speaking of the alleged ‘ wonders ’ of the New Testament, says : ‘ Either these events are miracles, or they never happened.’⁴ Dr. T. B. Strong also says : ‘ The majority of the Gospel miracles . . . force us to declare whether we regard the stories as unhistorical or whether we have some comprehensive view of the world into which we can fit them.’⁵ Both writers believe, then, that if the events happened as recorded they were miracles ; and their belief is shared by many others. It is not

¹ *Logic*, vol. ii. p. 215.

² *Philosophy of Theism*, p. 301.

³ *On Miracles*, 8th ed., p. 102. Cf. Wendland, *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 211.

⁴ *Supra*, book ii., chapter i.

⁵ *Ibid.*

necessary for us to determine the ground on which the belief rests. The ground may be different in different cases. It is sufficient for our present purpose to have demonstrated the existence of the belief. Our problem is: Is it impossible to adduce sufficient evidence to accredit an alleged event to a person who believes that if such an event happened it must have been a miracle?

We may discuss the question, in the first instance, with regard to evidence of our senses. The question considered from this point of view has been answered by Mill. 'Taking the question from the very beginning,' he says, 'it is evidently impossible to maintain that, if a supernatural fact really occurs, proof of its occurrence cannot be accessible to the human faculties. The evidence of our senses could prove this as it can prove other things.'¹

No doubt we should deem it necessary to exercise every possible care in order to avoid trickery or mistake before admitting the historicity of a miracle, even on the evidence of our senses. We have seen that great care is required to avoid such things in connexion with an alleged event regarded merely as extraordinary.² If the event in question is believed to be inexplicable from the totality of intramundane factors, we should naturally feel that still greater care was required. For, in this case, the event contradicts the fundamental postulate of Science; it contradicts the abstract

¹ *Three Essays on Religion* (R.P.A.), p. 92a.

² *Supra*, book i., chapter i.

laws of thought regarded as postulates of scientific knowledge; and, if believed to have happened, it must be attributed to the special action of God, in order to satisfy the Law of Sufficient Reason.

It is necessary for us to discuss our question, in the next place, with regard to evidence of witnesses. Is it impossible to obtain evidence of witnesses sufficiently strong to accredit a miracle? Hume answers the question in the affirmative.

An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding contains a section entitled, 'Of Miracles.' According to Hume, experience is our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact. 'Some events are found, in all countries and all ages, to have been constantly conjoined together: others are found to have been more variable, and sometimes to disappoint our expectations; so that, in our reasonings concerning matter of fact, there are all imaginable degrees of assurance, from the highest certainty to the lowest species of moral evidence.'¹ It is a note of the wise man, therefore, that he proportions his belief to the evidence. 'In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full *proof* of the future existence of that event. In other cases, he proceeds with more caution: He weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments.

¹ Hume, *Essays* (Green and Grose), vol. ii. p. 89.

To that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation ; and when at last he fixes his judgment, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability.' ¹ These principles are shown to be applicable in connexion with the testimony of men, and the reports of eyewitnesses and spectators. 'Our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses.' ² Further, 'as the evidence, derived from witnesses and human testimony, is founded on past experience, so it varies with the experience, and is regarded either as a *proof* or a *probability*, according as the conjunction between any particular kind of report and any kind of object has been found to be constant or variable.' ³ Now, 'suppose that the fact, which the testimony endeavours to establish, partakes of the extraordinary and the marvellous ; in that case, the evidence, resulting from the testimony, admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual. The reason, why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any *connexion*, which we perceive *a priori*, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them.' ⁴ Suppose, further, that the fact, instead of being only marvellous, is really miraculous.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 90.

² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 92.

‘A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature ; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. . . . There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full *proof*, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle ; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior.’¹ Hence there follows the famous maxim : ‘That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony is of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish ; and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior.’² But it is clear that Hume holds that it is impossible, from the nature of the case, to procure such a testimony. It is not contrary to experience for testimony to be false ; but all alleged miracles are contrary to experience.³

Hume’s argument has been discussed by Mill. ‘If, however,’ he says, ‘an alleged fact be in

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

³ See *ibid.*, p. 106.

contradiction, not to any number of approximate generalizations, but to a completed generalization grounded on a rigorous induction, it is said to be impossible, and is to be disbelieved totally.’¹ Mill then adds: ‘This last principle, simple and evident as it appears, is the doctrine which, on the occasion of an attempt to apply it to the question of the credibility of miracles, excited so violent a controversy. Hume’s celebrated doctrine, that nothing is credible which is contradictory to experience or at variance with laws of nature, is merely this very plain and harmless proposition, that whatever is contradictory to a complete induction is incredible.’² In *Three Essays on Religion* Mill discusses the subject at greater length. He says: ‘But the evidence of miracles, at least, to Protestant Christians, is not, in our own day . . . the evidence of our senses, but of witnesses, and even this not at first hand, but resting on the attestation of books and traditions.’³ After describing the Gospel miracles, Mill goes on to say, ‘It is to cases of this kind that Hume’s argument against the credibility of miracles was meant to apply.’⁴ ‘His argument is: The evidence of miracles consists of testimony. The ground of our reliance on testimony is our experience that, certain conditions being supposed, testimony is generally veracious. But the same experience

¹ *A System of Logic* (People’s ed.), p. 408.

² *Ibid.* ³ *Op. cit.* (R.P.A.), pp. 92b, 93a.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93a.

tells us that, even under the best conditions, testimony is frequently either intentionally or unintentionally false. When, therefore, the fact to which testimony is produced is one the happening of which would be more at variance with experience than the falsehood of testimony, we ought not to believe it. And this rule all prudent persons observe in the conduct of life. Those who do not are sure to suffer for their credulity. Now, a miracle is, in the highest possible degree, contradictory to experience ; for if it were not contradictory to experience it would not be a miracle. The very reason for its being regarded as a miracle is, that it is a breach of a law of nature—that is, of an otherwise invariable and inviolable uniformity in the succession of natural events. There is, therefore, the very strongest reason for disbelieving it that experience can give for disbelieving anything. But the mendacity or error of witnesses, even though numerous and of fair character, is quite within the bounds of even common experience. That supposition, therefore, ought to be preferred.’¹

It seems to us that the account which Mill gives of Hume’s argument is quite correct. By way of criticism of it he says : ‘ There are two apparently weak points in this argument. One is, that the evidence of experience to which its appeal is made is only negative evidence, which is not so conclusive as positive, since facts of which there had been no previous experience are

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

often discovered, and proved by positive experience to be true. The other seemingly vulnerable point is this. The argument has the appearance of assuming that the testimony of experience against miracles is undeviating and indubitable, as it would be if the whole question was about the probability of future miracles, none having taken place in the past ; whereas the very thing asserted on the other side is that there have been miracles, and that the testimony of experience is not wholly on the negative side. All the evidence alleged in favour of any miracle ought to be reckoned as counter-evidence in refutation of the ground on which it is asserted that miracles ought to be disbelieved. The question can only be stated fairly as depending on a balance of evidence : a certain amount of positive evidence in favour of miracles, and a negative presumption from the general course of human experience against them.' ¹ All this is perfectly true. But, even when Hume's argument is amended on the lines suggested by Mill, it still remains, as to its substance, what it was before.

The author of *Supernatural Religion*, too, argues on the lines laid down by Hume and Mill. 'The principle,' he says, 'which opposes itself to belief in miracles is very simple. Whatever is contradictory to universal and invariable experience is antecedently incredible, and as that sequence of phenomena which is called the order of nature is established and in accordance with

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

universal experience, miracles or alleged violations of that order are antecedently incredible. The preponderance of evidence for the invariability of the order of nature, in fact, is so enormous that it is impossible to credit the reality of such variations from it.' ¹

What we have now to consider is the validity of this line of argument. If the matter is to be decided solely on a balance of evidence, we shall always prefer thinking that there must be a mistake somewhere to thinking that miracles happened. From the point of view of evidence only Hume's argument as to its substance is irrefragable. Dr. Venn says : ' If we start with the Inductive principle of uniform causation, and then attempt (leaving the notion of Providential superintendence out of sight) to establish, first, such and such a miracle, and thence a Revelation ; it is hard to see how, on such principles, in the present state of feeling about scientific evidence, any accumulation of testimony could do more than baffle and perplex the judgment at the time, and leave us finally in doubt.' ²

But if, on the other hand, we approach the question under consideration with the conviction that miracles are physically and morally possible, and antecedently probable, we shall not feel justified in maintaining that it is impossible to obtain evidence of witnesses

¹ *Op. cit.*, 4th ed., vol. i. p. 78.

² *The Logic of Chance*, 2nd ed., pp. 461, 462. Cf., by the same author, *On some of the Characteristics of Belief, Scientific and Religious*, pp. 72, 73.

sufficiently strong to accredit them. As Professor G. F. Stout says in a letter to the present Lecturer : ' It is quite conceivable that in certain cases it may be more opposed to the organized system of knowledge that testimony should be false than that a physical miracle should have taken place.' ¹

Of course no evidence of witnesses can guarantee the historicity of particular miracles unless it be very strong. This is readily admitted by Apologists of the miraculous. For instance, John Leland says, ' And here it will be readily owned, that in a case of so extraordinary a nature (the case of raising a dead man to life), the evidence or testimony upon which we receive it, ought to be very strong and cogent.' ² Again : ' It will indeed be readily owned, that more and greater evidence may be justly required with regard to a thing that is unusual and out of the common course, than is required for a common fact ; but when there is evidence given sufficient to satisfy the mind, its being unusual and extraordinary ought not to be urged as a reason for not giving a full credit to it, or for pretending that the testimony concerning it is not to be depended upon. For the evidence for a fact out of the course of common observation and experience may be so circumstanced, as to leave no room for the least reasonable doubt ; and the assent to it may be as strong and firm as to any the most common and ordinary event ; nor is anything

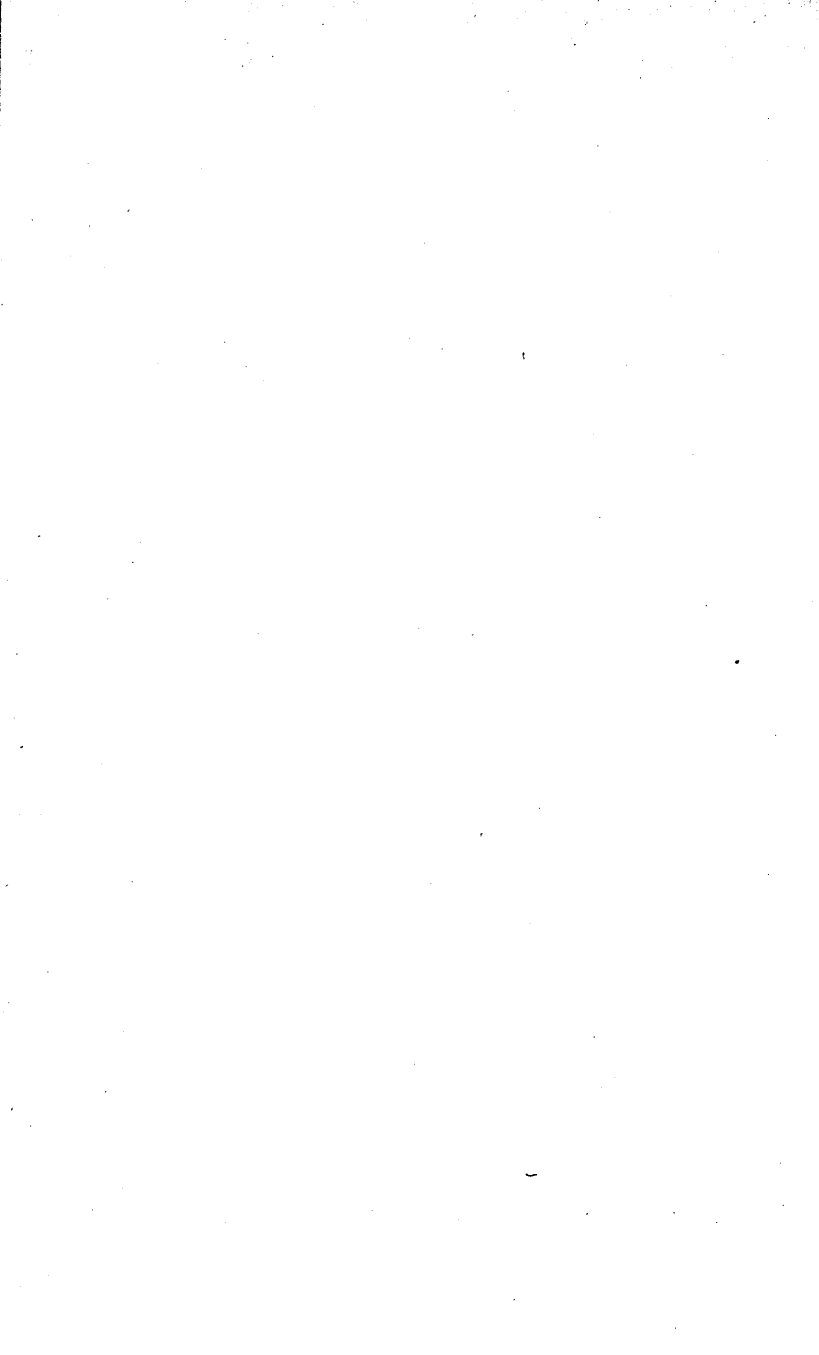
¹ March 1, 1912.

² *A View of the Deistical Writers*, pp. 240, 241.

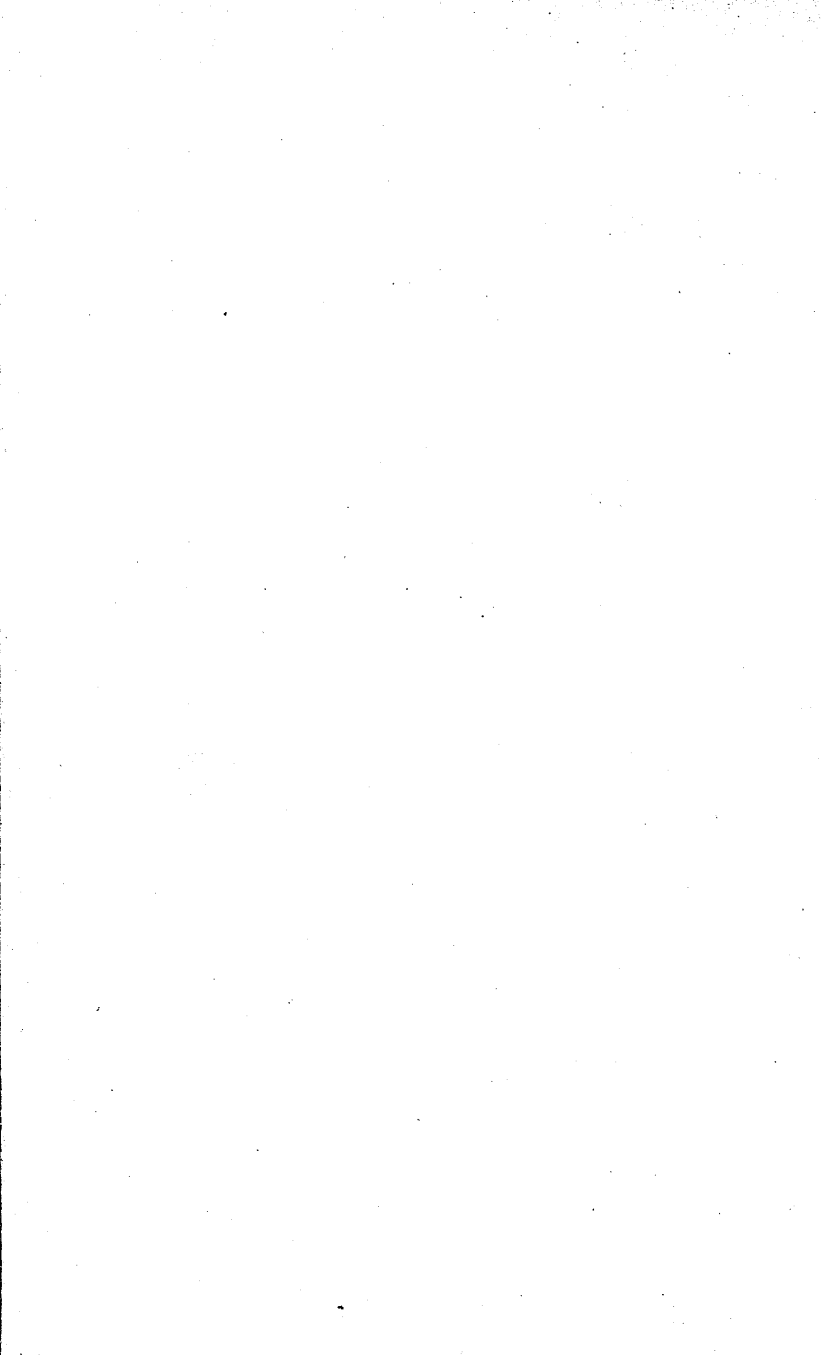
in that case to be deducted from the credit of the evidence, under pretence of the fact's being unusual or even miraculous.' ¹ And once more : ' It is true, that its (a miracle) being unusual and out of the ordinary course of observation and experience, is a good reason for not believing it without a strong and convincing evidence, a much stronger evidence than would be necessary in common and ordinary facts.' ²

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

² *Ibid.*, p. 281. Cf. Bernard, in Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. iii. pp. 386, 387.



Conclusion



CONCLUSION

THE EVIDENCE IN THE LIGHT OF THE THEORY

WE proceed now to draw the conclusion from the whole of our discussion.

Our problem is: Did the alleged miracles attributed to Jesus happen?

We concluded when regarding these miracles merely as marvellous events that some of them appeared to be better attested than others, but that we were not justified on purely historical grounds in saying that any considerable number of them at any rate did not happen as recorded.¹ So far only were we able to go on the level of the 'secondary or derivative' sciences.

But we saw that it is believed by many, for various reasons, that the acts in question are 'events which cannot be explained from the totality of intramundane factors.'² It is necessary to reiterate that no event can be proved scientifically to be a miracle in this sense. But the belief exists that certain events, if they happened, were miracles in the sense defined above.

We have argued that on the assumption that there exists 'a personal Spirit, perfectly good, who in holy

¹ Book i., chapter viii.

² Book ii., chapter i.

love creates, sustains, and orders all,' events which are inexplicable from the totality of intramundane factors are physically and morally possible, and also antecedently probable.¹

And if such events are physically and morally possible, and even antecedently probable, it is contended that we have no right to say that it is impossible to obtain evidence of witnesses sufficiently strong to accredit them.²

We come now to reconsider the evidence for the alleged miracles of Jesus in the light of this conclusion. Is the impression made upon us by the evidence as described in our First Book affected in any way by the results reached in the Second Book? Is the credibility of the marvellous events attributed to Jesus in the Gospels increased or lessened by regarding them as miracles in the strict sense?

But before proceeding to this our final problem, we may consider how 'other miracles' fare by being regarded as 'events which cannot be explained from the totality of intramundane factors.'

In this case a new criterion of credibility is introduced. If any event on the supposition that it happened is to be regarded as a miracle in the strict sense then it must be attributed to the direct action of God. But we cannot attribute anything to the special action of God unless it is in harmony with His character con-

¹ Book ii., chapters ii.-iv.

² Book ii., chapter v.

ceived as the morally Highest. This consideration justifies the rejection of many, if not most, of the extra-Evangelic miracles.

Some of them are foolish and childish in their nature. The incident of giving life to clay images, described in one of the Apocryphal Gospels, is an instance of this kind. And several other instances are related in connexion with Becket and Francis of Assisi. Some are grotesque in the extreme. Their character is such that we feel it was not morally possible for God to have wrought them.

Again, the motive of some of the alleged extra-Evangelic miracles is unsatisfactory and unworthy.

Finally, a large proportion of the other cycles of miracles are devoid of any antecedent probability. There is no antecedent probability that miracles would be wrought through Vespasian. It is not denied that cures may have been wrought by his touch. What is asserted is that there is no antecedent probability that this emperor would work miracles. Further, there is little or no antecedent probability that God would intervene to work miracles at the tomb, or through the relics, of any one of the Saints. There is nothing sufficiently unique in the circumstances, and in the men themselves, to create a presumption that a Divine interposition would take place for their sakes in this way.

When we consider the miracles attributed to Jesus in the Gospels we find that they stand on quite a

different plane, in the respects mentioned above, from the miracles rejected.

With regard to their intrinsic nature, we see that they, as a class at least, are not foolish, childish, or grotesque, even if some would apply any one of these terms to a single instance. This fact affects very materially the question of moral possibility. There is hardly one of the miracles which have been the subject of our special consideration in this Lecture, which would be called clearly unworthy of God. Objection is sometimes taken to the case of the demons entering the swine. But it should be remembered that this incident is quite a secondary feature of the miracle itself. The miracle primarily consisted in healing the demoniac. And further, according to the accounts in Mark and Luke, Jesus commanded the unclean spirits to come out of the man, but [he merely allowed them to enter the swine at their request. The account in Matthew, it is true, is different. Matthew summarizes. The command to come out of the man, and the permission to enter the swine, are summed up in one word, 'Go.' But even if we suppose that Jesus 'sent' the demons into the swine, it is not clear that the act would be a reflection on his moral character and upon that of God, if we bear in mind current modes of thought and the lesson which such a demonstration of the victory of the Kingdom of God might convey to simple minds.

Again, we do not feel compelled to take exception to the motives alleged for the miracles of Jesus. In

this respect they stand incomparably higher than the bulk of the miracles which are rejected. The only miracle which is sometimes called in question in this connexion is that of 'cursing' the fig-tree. But the narrative does not state that Jesus was angry with the tree. He expected to find fruit on it. And the appearance of the tree was responsible for the expectation. The miracle is recorded as an 'acted parable,' bearing on the analogous phenomena of the Jewish people. Its purpose, consequently, was the teaching of an important truth.

Further, Christian Doctrine claims that Jesus was a direct personal representative of God on earth. 'Christianity with perfect justice,' says Wendland, 'maintains that in the Person of Jesus God has spoken His final word in history.' ¹

It is not necessary for our present purpose to demonstrate the 'perfect justice' of this claim. It will suffice if we point out the inference which can be drawn from it.

If Jesus was the direct personal representative of God on earth, then in view of what has been said already about the antecedent probability of miracles,² it becomes antecedently probable that God would work miracles through him. Professor Wendland says: 'If we have the final revelation in the person of Jesus, a revelation not adequately explicable by the previous

¹ *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 126.

² Book ii., chapter iv.

history of religion, we cannot but ask whether it is not easily intelligible that, in the case of this unique personality, the standards of Divine action should transcend what is customary elsewhere? If Jesus held Himself the bearer of salvation for all mankind, if He was sure that in Him there had been given the final and sufficient revelation, is it not probable that at still other points in His life there were extraordinary incidents which outgo the analogies of experience elsewhere? ' ¹

And it is claimed, as a matter of fact, that the miraculous deeds attributed to Jesus are bound up inseparably with his character and mission as the direct personal representative of God on earth. 'They harmonize completely,' says Dr. Illingworth, 'with His whole character and work—being mainly acts of charity and mercy, either to the bodies or to the souls of men; and at the same time profoundly symbolical of spiritual truth.' ² Wendland, it is true, says that 'in the narratives of His life we meet with a small isolated number of singular acts—His walking on the sea and the like—which have but a loose connexion with the picture of His character as a whole.' ³ But it would not be difficult to show that even this alleged miracle harmonizes with the whole work of Jesus.

¹ *Miracles and Christianity*, pp. 233, 234. Cf. Platt, *Miracles: an outline of the Christian View*, pp. 36 ff.

² *Divine Immanence*, pp. 88, 89.

³ *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 234.

Speaking of the stilling of the storm and the walking on the sea, Dr. Bruce says: 'The object Jesus had in view in both cases was to guard against danger threatening the men with whom the fortunes of the Kingdom were identified.'¹ But in any case the miracles of Jesus as a class are not affected by our judgment of such exceptions as have been referred to.

Now, it is clear that the belief that it was antecedently probable that miracles would be performed by Jesus, and the conviction that the miracles attributed to him in the Gospels are, for the most part at least, perfectly congruous with his character and work, must affect very materially the impression made upon us by the evidence in support of those miracles.

This point has been very clearly and fully enunciated by Dr. Mozley. He says: 'We may note it as a law of evidence, that our estimate of the evidences of any fact necessarily varies according to the greater or less antecedent probability which we attach to the fact.'² Again: 'Antecedent probability is the rational complement of external evidence; a law of evidence unites the two; and they cannot practically be separated.'³ And finally: 'Antecedent probability is a constitutional element of evidence, and external testimony has reasonably a different weight, according as it comes to us with or without it.'⁴

¹ *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, p. 271. See the whole chapter on *The Gospel Miracles in relation to the Worker*. Cf. Platt, *op. cit.*, pp. 40, 41.

² *On Miracles*, pp. xxiii., xxiv. ³ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

Applying this law to the subject under our discussion the conclusion to which we come is: That if the miracles attributed to Jesus in the Gospels are believed to be 'events which cannot be explained from the totality of intramundane factors,' then, on the assumption that the fundamental postulate of Christian Theism is valid, and that Jesus was a direct personal representative of God on earth, the evidence in support of those miracles is sufficient to justify the belief that they happened, speaking generally, as recorded.

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